From the Maccabees to the Mishnah

Shaye J. D. Cohen

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Foreword to the First Edition

Out of the innumerable religious traditions, cults, and movements of the early Roman Empire, two alone transformed themselves to outlast that empire—even to our own time. The remarkable thing is that both had their origins in sects of Judaism—hardly the most powerful or conspicuous of Roman religions. Those two are rabbinic Judaism and Christianity. The present book investigates that extraordinarily fertile period of Jewish history—the three and a half centuries "from the Maccabees to the Mishnah"—which gave rise to these two religions that have been so central a part of our own history, and so problematic to each other.

That the Library of Early Christianity should include a book on Jewish history of the Hellenistic and Roman periods is obvious. What may not be so self-evident is that this book, unlike many in similar series in the past, does not treat the history of Judaism as merely ancillary or preparatory to the history of Christianity. The history of Christianity's beginnings is *part* of the history of Judaism in antiquity, and both are part of the history of Greco-Roman culture.

It is no exaggeration, I think, to say that an intellectual revolution has taken place—rather, is still in progress—in our understanding of early Judaism. Such astonishing new discoveries as the Dead Sea Scrolls, the existence of a vast body of Jewish art from antiquity, and the deciphering of Jewish mystical texts have been the most dramatic occasions for revising our picture of ancient Judaism. Even more important has been the burgeoning of interdisciplinary methods in studying the sources, both the newly discovered ones and those long familiar, and the employment of multiple methods is the special strength of the present book. It is the achievement of Shaye Cohen to have brought together the results of a wide range of scholarship of fields often

separate. In keeping with the design of the series, he has avoided the kind of argument and documentation that is necessary in the scholarly monographs in which work as new as this is ordinarily presented. Nevertheless, the expert as well as the novice will recognize both the erudition that lies behind this book and the freshness of its presentation.

Wayne A. Meeks

Preface to the Third Edition

I remain grateful to Westminster John Knox Press for keeping this book in print over many years and for giving me yet another opportunity to revise it and update it. I have rewritten sentences and paragraphs here and there, hoping to enhance clarity and remove errors. I have added some references in footnotes. Most important, I have added the entire chapter 8, which is devoted to the "parting of the ways" between Jews and Christians in the second century of our era. This chapter is a shortened and revised version of my "In Between: Jewish-Christians and the Curse of the Heretics," in *Partings: How Judaism and Christianity Became Two*, edited by Hershel Shanks (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2013), 207–36. Readers who enjoy that chapter should seek out the volume from which it is extracted.

If I were to begin to rewrite this book, there would be no end. In particular, I would be much more careful in my use of the terms "Judaism" and "Christianity." For the historian, "Judaism" and "Christianity" exist only insofar as they describe the beliefs and practices, institutions and attitudes, politics and communities of people. For the historian (as opposed to the theologian or philosopher or preacher), "Judaism" and "Christianity" are not theological abstractions. "Judaism" is what Jews do; "Christianity" is what Christians do. Large chunks of this book would need to be rewritten to reflect this perspective, but I must be content with the little bit of rewriting that I was able to accomplish. Similarly, sometimes I speak about "Jews," especially in my historical survey in chapter 1, where I would now be more careful and write "Judeans."

In spite of its changes and improvements, this third edition (with the exception of chapter 8) remains substantially the same as the previous two. Readers who liked those two editions will, I hope, like this one as well; readers

who found something to criticize in the earlier editions will no doubt succeed in doing so here as well.

S. J. D. C.
April 2014

PS: When I wrote the codicil to the preface of the second edition, I earnestly hoped that I would not need to do so for the third. But alas, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) continues on its anti-Israel course. It has now (20 June 2014) voted to divest from three American companies that it claims are aiding the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. What makes the vote so disturbing is its obsession with Israel and Israel's sins. It is one thing to say that Israel has not treated the Palestinians compassionately or wisely. This is obviously true. But it is quite another to condemn Israel alone when there is so much malfeasance and evil behavior all around the Near East. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) threatens only Israel with divestment, ignoring the wrongs committed by the Palestinian leadership in Gaza and the West Bank, wrongs committed against their own people as well as against Israelis. The Middle East is ablaze with war, civil war, rebellion, and oppression; human rights are abused aplenty in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Iran, just to mention four egregious examples; in fact, the concept of "human rights" is all but unknown in the region. Israel is in a legal state of war with many of its neighbors; many of its Palestinian subjects support Hamas and Hezbollah, which have each declared, publicly and unambiguously, that they intend to see Israel destroyed. But the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), oblivious to all this, criticizes Israel alone for its faults. Protestations of fairness and justice ring hollow when Israel is held to a standard that no other country in the region is held to and when so much evil and suffering in the region are ignored. With this vote the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has chosen to align itself with Israel's enemies.

I have no complaint against WJK Press. My complaint is directed solely against WJK's parent body, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), whose anti-Israel policies I condemn.

Preface to the Second Edition

In revising this book for its second edition, I have rewritten many paragraphs to enhance clarity and remove errors; made much fuller use of Qumran material in chapter 3; introduced a section on women's Judaism in chapter 3; given a fuller introduction to the Mishnah in chapter 7; added numerous footnotes, mostly to provide references to primary sources or collections of primary sources; and updated somewhat the "Suggestions for Further Reading." Still, this is not a wholesale revision, and readers who disliked the first edition of this book will, I fear, also dislike the second. In my revisions I was aided by my research assistant Ms. Eve Levavi.

A reminder: citations from the Tanak (the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament) follow the verse numeration of the Hebrew, which occasionally differs slightly from that of the English versions. [Note change of policy for the third edition: verse numeration of biblical citations follows the NRSV.]

I am grateful to Westminster John Knox Press for keeping this book in print since 1987 and for acceding to my suggestion for a second edition.

I dedicated the first edition of this book to the memory of my father. In the interim my mother too has passed on, and I dedicate this second edition to her memory. May their souls be bound up in the bond of the living.

S. J. D. C.
July 2005

PS: The first edition of this book was published by the Westminster Press in 1987 in the Library of Early Christianity series, edited by Wayne Meeks. I was delighted then to be associated with a Presbyterian publishing house. It is one of the blessings of America that a Presbyterian publisher would commission

a Jew to write a book on early Judaism for a series oriented to students of the New Testament. This never happened in the old country. Eighteen years later I am grateful to Westminster John Knox Press for publishing this second edition and remain grateful to the press for its courtesies to me over the years. I am no longer happy, however, to be associated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the parent body of WJK, because I am deeply pained by the recent anti-Israel turn in its policies. The fact that WJK is editorially and fiscally independent of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) affords small consolation; by publishing this book with WJK I am associating myself perforce with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), an organization whose anti-Israel policies I condemn and distrust.

S. J. D. C.
December 2005

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Preface to the First Edition

In order to make this book accessible to students and other nonspecialists, I have kept the bibliographical annotation to a minimum. I provide references for all quoted sources and for most of the obscure texts to which I allude, but I do not as a rule provide references for those sources which are well indexed and readily available in English (notably the works of Philo and Josephus) or which can be tracked down easily through the modern works listed in the suggested readings. I admit that I have been somewhat inconsistent in this matter, and I apologize to any reader who is inconvenienced by my bibliographical shorthand. I cite the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, and the Loeb Classical Library translation of Josephus (by Henry St. J. Thackeray, Ralph Marcus, Allen Wikgren, and Louis H. Feldman, published by Harvard University Press in nine volumes, 1926–65), except that I have occasionally departed from them wherever I felt it necessary. The other translations I have used are listed in the Suggestions for Further Reading under "Sources." Citations from the Tanak are according to the verse numeration of the Hebrew. [Note change of policy for the third edition: verse numeration of biblical citations follows the NRSV.]

The writing of this book was much more difficult and painful than I had anticipated, and I am grateful to various friends for their advice and encouragement. Professor Wayne Meeks read the entire manuscript, made many helpful suggestions, forced me to clarify both my prose and my ideas, and rescued me from errors large and small. Chapter 3 was immeasurably improved by the suggestions and criticisms of Professor George W. E. Nickelsburg, Rabbi Leonard Gordon, and Mr. Bradley Artson. Chapter 6 was similarly improved by the suggestions and criticisms of Professor John J. Collins. Ms. Stefanie Siegmund helped me organize my ideas in chapter 1. The level of

accuracy in chapters 2 through 5 was raised substantially by the detailed comments of my teacher Professor Morton Smith. To all of these friends I am deeply grateful, and if I have not incorporated all of their suggestions, it is my own stubbornness which is to blame.

According to rabbinic lore (Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat* 31a), when a person comes before the heavenly tribunal after his death he is asked, "Did you conduct your trade honestly? Did you set aside time for the study of Torah? Did you raise a family?" My father lived his life in such a way that he could answer all these questions in the affirmative. In business he had a reputation as a man whose word could be trusted. Every morning before going to work and every night before going to sleep, he would sit in his favorite chair and study a Jewish book. I miss him, and I dedicate this book to his memory.

S. J. D. C.
August 28, 1986

1

Ancient Judaism

Chronology and Definitions

The goal of this book is to interpret ancient Judaism: to identify its major ideas, to describe its salient practices, to trace its unifying patterns, and to assess its relationship to Israelite religion and society. The book is arranged thematically rather than chronologically, but to make the argument easier to follow, in the first section of this chapter, I briefly survey the chronology of ancient Judaism, and in the second section I discuss some of the difficulties of periodization. In the third section, I outline the major themes of each chapter. I conclude with a brief discussion of unity and diversity in ancient Judaism.

CHRONOLOGY

In 587 BCE, many of the inhabitants of the kingdom of Judah were exiled to Babylonia, thereby inaugurating the *exilic period.* (BCE = before the Common Era; and CE = of the Common Era—religiously neutral equivalents of BC = before Christ; and AD = anno Domini, "Year of the Lord.") In 587, Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed and the kingdom was no longer. With the Persian conquest of Babylonia in 539 BCE, the Judeans (or Jews) were permitted by the conqueror, Cyrus the Great, to return to their homeland. Some of them took advantage of his offer. At least two waves of Babylonian Jews returned to the land of Judea during the 530s and 520s BCE. After some complex and bitter feuding with the community of those who never had been exiled, the Jews rebuilt the temple and dedicated it in 516 BCE. Jeremiah and Ezekiel were active at the beginning of the exilic period; Second Isaiah and

his school (the anonymous authors of Isa. 40–66), Haggai, and Zechariah (the author of Zech. 1–8) were active at its end.

The *Persian period* lasted only two hundred years, from 539 BCE (the conquest of Babylonia by Cyrus the Great) to 334 or 333 BCE (the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great). The most important achievement of the period, aside from the restoration of the temple, was the activity of Ezra (probably 458 BCE, although many scholars prefer a date about thirty years later) and Nehemiah (445 and 432 BCE). Ezra led another wave of returnees from Babylonia, tried to dissolve the marriages with non-Jews that had been contracted primarily by the priesthood and the aristocracy, and read "the book of the instruction (*Torah*) of Moses" to the people. Nehemiah had a more variegated career, including the fortification and repopulation of the city of Jerusalem, the cancellation of the debts of the poor, and a long list of religious reforms. The generation of Ezra and Nehemiah is the last to be treated by the biblical historians. Malachi was the last of the prophets (actually "Malachi" is probably not a name but a common noun for "my messenger" or, with a slightly different punctuation, "his messenger"; in other words, the book of Malachi is anonymous), and he probably lived just before Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra and Nehemiah mark the end of "the Bible" and "biblical Israel" (see next section and chap. 6).

The conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great inaugurated the *Hellenistic period*. After Alexander's death (323 BCE), his empire was divided by his generals. Twenty years of fighting followed. Finally the dust settled (301 BCE), and Judea was part of the kingdom of Egypt (ruled by the Macedonian Ptolemies). A century later (200 BCE), Judea was conquered by the Macedonian kings of Syria (the Seleucids). In the sphere of cultural history, the Hellenistic period endured for centuries, perhaps until the Arab conquests of the seventh century CE. From the perspective of political history, however, the Hellenistic period was much shorter. For most inhabitants of the Levant, it ended when the rule of the Macedonian kings of Egypt and Syria was replaced by that of Rome in the first century BCE. For the Jews, it was even shorter.

Throughout the Persian and Hellenistic periods, the Jews maintained a quiescent attitude toward their rulers. There is no indication of any serious uprising by the Jews against the empires that ruled them. This changed dramatically in the 160s BCE. In 168–167 BCE, Antiochus Epiphanes, the Seleucid king of Syria, profaned the temple and persecuted Judaism. In the temple he erected an altar to Zeus, and everywhere he attempted to compel the Jews to violate the laws of the Torah. Various groups of Jews rebelled against the king, the most prominent of them being the clan of Mattathias the Hasmonean and his son Judah the Maccabee (hence the entire dynasty is often called Maccabean or Hasmonean). In 164 BCE the Maccabees reconquered

and purified the temple; the end of Seleucid rule followed twenty years later (142 BCE).

The most striking feature of the Hellenistic period is its spectacular finish, but in their own quiet and poorly attested way, the fourth and third centuries BCE emerge as an important transition period in the history of Judaism. These centuries witnessed the growth of the Diaspora, the "scattering" of the Jews throughout the world; the beginnings of the canonization of Scripture; the writing of the earliest nonbiblical works that have been preserved; the gradual transformation of prophecy into apocalypse; the emergence of a class of scribes, laypeople learned in the sacred traditions. Some books of the Bible were written during this period, all of them anonymous, but they are impressive in both number and importance (e.g., Jonah and Job). The latest book in the Bible, Daniel, was written at the very end of the Hellenistic period, during the dark days of the Antiochian persecution.

The Maccabean period lasted a century, from the victory of 164 BCE to the entrance of the Romans into Jerusalem in 63 BCE. During their tenure, the Maccabees gradually increased their power and prestige. They began as rebels against the Seleucid Empire, but less than ten years after Judah's death, his brother was appointed high priest by a relation of Antiochus Epiphanes! By the 140s and 130s BCE, the Seleucids had little choice but to accept the independence of the Maccabean state. The rise of the Maccabees within the Jewish polity was just as phenomenal. They began as insignificant country priests and became high priests and kings, the rulers of an independent state. They pursued an aggressive foreign policy, seeking alliance with Rome against the Seleucids and carving out for themselves a kingdom larger than that of David and Solomon.

Their fall from power was caused by both internal and external enemies. During the reigns of John Hyrcanus (135–104 BCE) and Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 BCE), many Jews opposed Maccabean rule. These opponents were not "hellenizers" and "lawless" Jews who supported Antiochus's attempt to destroy Judaism, but loyal Jews who had had enough of the Maccabees' autocratic ways. The Seleucids and the Greek city-states of the region never fully accepted Maccabean independence, but the most potent external threat came from a power that first entered the scene as a friend and ally. At first, while the Seleucid Empire was still strong, the Romans accepted a treaty of alliance with the Maccabees (1 Macc. 8); as the proverb says, "An enemy of my enemy is my friend." However, as Seleucid power waned and Maccabean power increased, the Romans realized that it was no longer to their advantage to support the Judean state since the Maccabees had become as much a threat to Roman interests in the area as the Seleucids had been. After the Romans conquered Jerusalem in 63 BCE, they realized that the Maccabees were a

nationalist element that could not be combined easily with their own imperial vision, so the Maccabees were pushed aside and a new dynasty was created.

The new dynasty owed everything to the Romans and therefore supported them wholeheartedly. The founder of the dynasty was Herod the Great (37–4 BCE). He tried to be the king over all his subjects, not just the Jews. Herod benefacted pagan cities and temples as well as Jewish cities and the temple of Jerusalem. He also built numerous fortresses, the most famous of which was Masada. To pay for all these projects, he imposed heavy taxes, and because he felt insecure in his rule, he killed numerous members of the aristocracy whose claims to prestige and status within the Jewish community were stronger than his own. He also killed many of his wives and children, suspecting them (sometimes rightly) of plotting rebellion.

The Roman-Jewish symbiosis was at its peak during the reigns of Herod the Great and his grandson Herod Agrippa I (41–44 CE). But the Romans were moving away from rule over the Jews through vassal kings to rule through Roman administrators, called procurators or prefects. These were a motley lot, and for the most part they were not very sensitive to the needs of the populace. Some were brutal (notably Pontius Pilate), others corrupt, most incompetent. As a result of their mistakes, ethnic strife in the country between Jews and pagans, social unrest in the Jewish polity, and severe economic problems, a war broke out against the Romans in 66 CE, about 128 years after the Romans first entered Jerusalem (from 63 BCE to 66 CE is 128 years, not 129, because there is no year 0). This is the "great revolt" or the "first revolt."

Taken by surprise, the Romans suffered a few serious defeats at first, but in the summer of 67 CE Vespasian marched from Syria into Galilee and began the slow and deliberate reconquest. By the year 68 the entire country, except for Jerusalem and a few isolated strongholds, had been pacified. Vespasian was in no rush, however, to storm Jerusalem. The Jews were killing each other in their own power struggles; most important, there also was a power vacuum in Rome in the wake of Nero's suicide in June of 68 CE. Vespasian had everything to gain and nothing to lose by taking his time. He played his cards correctly, with the result that in July of 69 CE, he had himself proclaimed emperor. He spent the rest of that year securing his power. A new emperor needs a victory to prove his worth, and Vespasian entrusted the war to his son Titus. After a brutal siege, in the summer of 70 CE Jerusalem was retaken and the temple was destroyed. A few mop-up operations remained, notably the taking of Masada (73 or 74 CE), but for all practical purposes, the war was over. The *Second Temple period* came to an end.

The war of 66–70 was the first Jewish revolt against the Romans but not the last. In 115–117, the Jews of Egypt, Cyprus, and Cyrenaica (in modern-day

Libya) rebelled against the Romans. The Jews of the land of Israel apparently did not participate in this war to any significant extent, and the causes and course of the war are most obscure. (During the same years the Jews of Babylonia, alongside their Parthian rulers, fought the Romans who had invaded their country, but from all indications this was a separate war altogether and need not be considered in this book.) The other major rebellion is that of Bar Kokhba (132–135), sometimes called the "second revolt." The causes and course of this war are most obscure as well, but from all indications the wars of 115–117 and 132–135 were serious affairs, with serious consequences. The war of 115–117 resulted in the decimation of Egyptian Jewry, which had been the largest and most important Jewish community of the Roman Diaspora. The Bar Kokhba war resulted in the paganization of the city of Jerusalem (now rebuilt under the name Aelia Capitolina) and the changing of the country's name from Judea to Palaestina (Palestine).

The latter part of the Second Temple period, that is, the period from the rise of the Maccabees (160s BCE) to the destruction of the temple (70 CE), was a rich and significant chapter in Jewish history. This was the age of sects (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, the Qumran community, the Jesus movement (Christians), Sicarii, Zealots, and others) and sectarian literature; apocalypses and varied speculations about God's control of human events, the nature of evil, and the secrets of the end time; the growth of the synagogue, liturgical prayer and scriptural study; the "golden age" of Diaspora Judaism, especially in Egypt, which produced a rich literature in Greek, seeking to package Jewish ideas in Hellenistic wrapping; and Judaism's intense interaction with its ambient culture, producing in some quarters a hatred of Judaism but in others an attraction to it (resulting in converts and God-fearers).

Roman rule over the Jews continued until the Parthian and Arab conquests of the sixth and seventh centuries CE (by which time the Roman Empire had become Christian and Byzantine). Yet the centuries after the destruction of the temple often receive the name *the rabbinic period.* The word *rabbi* means "my master" and was originally a deferential form of address (like the French *monsieur*). By the first century CE, the title was normally used by students when addressing their teacher (John 1:38). In the second century CE, the meaning of the word began to change. It remained a generic title for a teacher or anyone in a position of authority, but it also became a technical term designating a member of that society which, from the second century to the sixth, in both Israel and Babylonia, created a voluminous and distinctive literature. The earliest of these works, completed around the year 200 CE, was the Mishnah. The Mishnah in turn was the subject of two gigantic commentaries (or more accurately, works that claimed to be commentaries): the Talmud of the land of Israel (also called the Jerusalem Talmud, or Yerushalmi), completed

around 360–400, and the Talmud of Babylonia (the Babylonian Talmud, or Bavli), completed around the year 500 (but still being edited two or three centuries later). The rabbis also produced a series of commentaries on Scripture and various other works. In this book "the rabbis" and "the rabbinic period" refer to the society and religion of the second to sixth centuries CE.

PERIODIZATION AND PERSPECTIVE

Periodization based on the political setting of ancient Judaism is relatively benign, for there are no ideological issues at stake. No one will contest the fact that the Persians, the Hellenistic dynasties, the Maccabees, and the Romans successively ruled the Jewish polity in the land of Israel. In contrast, periodization based on religious or cultural factors is ideologically charged. The bias may be either Jewish or Christian, because both Jews and Christians have a stake in the interpretation of ancient Judaism.

At the end of the previous section, I gave a relatively neutral definition of "the rabbinic period," but as I shall discuss in chapter 7, even my restricted use of the term has an element of bias. The Judaism created by the rabbis of antiquity gradually became the dominant form of Judaism, and it remained the dominant form until the nineteenth century. The rabbis were the "winners" of ancient Jewish history. But in the second to sixth centuries, the rabbis were not nearly as dominant as they would become later, and the concept "the rabbinic period" slights the rabbis' opponents (the losers) and falsely implies that after 70 CE all Jews accepted the rabbis as their leaders and followed the way of rabbinic Judaism. In spite of this element of pro-rabbinic bias, "the rabbinic period" remains a useful and justifiable concept because, inasmuch as historians of Judaism rely primarily on literary evidence, it highlights the fact that the major literary evidence for the Judaism of the second to sixth centuries is exclusively rabbinic.

If we accept the claims of the rabbis themselves, the rabbinic period begins much earlier than the second century CE. The rabbis believed themselves to have been the bearers of a sacred tradition revealed by God to Moses, and thus the direct heirs of the communal leaders of the Jews throughout the generations. According to this belief (or "myth"), by which the rabbis legitimated themselves and their teachings, the rabbinic period begins with "Moses our rabbi." Only fundamentalist Jews today accept the historicity of this perspective, but modern scholars, especially Jewish scholars, have been influenced by it as well. Until recently scholars spoke readily of a normative Judaism, as if rabbinic Judaism (and its antecedents) were always the dominant and authentic expression of Judaism. Many scholars still view the Second Temple period

through rabbinic spectacles, assuming that all the central institutions of society were under rabbinic aegis, and ascribing enormous influence and power to various protorabbinic figures. But none of these beliefs can be substantiated by historical evidence. For the believer, rabbinic Judaism is normative Judaism, and the rabbis were always at the center of Jewish history. For the historian, however, "the rabbis" and "the rabbinic period" become meaningful entities only after 70 CE. I shall return to this point in chapters 5 and 7.

Christianity is responsible for an entirely different perspective and periodization. Nineteenth-century scholars, especially in Germany, used the term "late Judaism" (*Spätjudentum*) to designate the religion and society of the Jews after Ezra or after the Maccabees. The term disparaged, and was meant to disparage, the Judaism it designated. The Judaism of the Second Temple period was "late" because it was approaching the end of its appointed time and was about to relinquish to Christianity whatever value it still retained. "Late Judaism" was a sterile, lifeless organism, waiting in vain for the infusion of spirituality that only Christianity could provide. After the birth of Christianity, "late Judaism" lost all importance and could be ignored by scholars and Christians alike. The fact that Judaism continued to flourish and develop for millennia after the period of "late Judaism" did not affect the currency of the term, because the term derived not from historical analysis but from theological belief.

Several modern writers continue to use the term "late Judaism," unaware of its origins and implications, but in recent years many scholars have begun to use the term "early Judaism" as its bias-free replacement. What once was late is now deemed early! While "early Judaism" lacks the anti-Jewish overtones of "late Judaism," it is chronologically vague, and therefore other, more precise expressions are preferable. One scholar has proposed that the Judaism of the last centuries of the Second Temple period be called "middle Judaism," to distinguish it from the "early Judaism" of the Persian period that preceded it and from the "rabbinic Judaism" that followed it.[1]

Another legacy of Christianity is the term "intertestamental period." Since the New Testament is the "end" of the Old Testament, the centuries that linked the two were dubbed "the intertestamental period." This perspective is not necessarily prejudicial to its subject, but it usually is, because it regards "intertestamental Judaism" primarily as the preparation for the emergence of Christianity. Books with titles like "Judaism in the Age of Jesus" or "The Jewish Background to the New Testament" often have as their purpose, whether explicit or implicit, the demonstration that "intertestamental Judaism" was

1. Gabriele Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); and other works by the same author.

somehow "fulfilled" or "completed" when it gave birth to Christianity. But ancient Judaism is worthy of study in its own right, not only because it is the matrix of early Christianity. Whether Christianity is indeed the fulfillment of the Old Testament and of intertestamental Judaism is a question that a historian cannot answer.

Many writers, both Jewish and Christian, call the period covered by this book "postbiblical Judaism," in contrast with "biblical Israel," the period that preceded it. The contrast between "Israel" and "Judaism" is important, as I shall discuss in the next section, but the word "biblical" is confusing. By the first century CE (see chap. 6), many Jews in antiquity believed that the Bible was completed in the time of Ezra, during the Persian period (mid-fifth century BCE). If this belief is correct, the distinction between biblical and postbiblical is simple: something biblical is pre-Persian or Persian, something postbiblical is post-Persian. This belief, however, is erroneous because the Bible contains many works that were written in the Hellenistic period, and one, the book of Daniel, that was written in the Hasmonean period. Thus, if we apply the label "postbiblical" to the books of *Enoch* and Ben Sira (Sirach), because the former was written in the third century BCE and the latter in the second century BCE, we are faced with the anomaly that these "postbiblical" works predate the "biblical" book of Daniel. (Of course, we could also call Daniel postbiblical, but such a description seems strange since Daniel is in the Bible.) Thus the believer can use the term "biblical" as a chronological indicator, but the historian cannot.

FROM PREEXILIC ISRAEL TO SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM

When describing the rebuilding of the Second Temple, Josephus remarks that those who returned from Babylonia should be called "Jews" (or "Judeans," *Ioudaioi* in Greek, literally, "those of the tribe of Judah") rather than "Israelites."[2] Josephus was referring only to a change in nomenclature, but that change masks a much more significant shift. The religion, society, and culture of the preexilic kingdoms of Judah and Israel differ in many important ways from those of the period after the destruction of the temple in 587 BCE. The practices, ideas, and institutions that were elaborated during the Second Temple period formed and still form the basis of the religion known as Judaism.

How does Israelite religion differ from Judaism? In many respects, of course, it doesn't. The two are linked by a common belief in the one supreme

2. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 11.5.7 §173.

God, who created the world, chose the Israelites/Jews to be his people, and entered into a covenantal relationship with them; by a shared attachment to the Holy Land of Israel, the holy city of Jerusalem, and the holy temple; and by the same sacred calendar and many of the same religious observances. Even more important than these commonalities is the fact that the Jews of all times have always seen themselves not merely as the successors to, but also as the continuators of, the legacy of preexilic Israel. Christianity claimed (and to some extent, still claims) to be the true Israel, but this claim was accompanied by an assertion of newness. Christianity is the fruit of a new creation, a new revelation, and a new covenant (a New Testament). Premodern Judaism never developed this sense of newness, and it is this sense of continuity that more than anything else connects Second Temple Judaism to preexilic Israel, in spite of numerous changes and enormous upheavals.

Preexilic Israel was a tribal society living on its ancestral land. Membership in a tribe, and consequently the rights of citizenship (e.g., the right to own land), depended exclusively on birth. There was no established process by which a foreigner could be absorbed into the Israelite polity. Second Temple Judaism, in contrast, was not a tribal society. When the Jews returned from Babylonia, they returned not as tribes but as clans. The entire tribal structure had been destroyed. Many Jews did not return to the land of Israel but remained in Babylonia; later, many Jews left the land of Israel to live throughout the Mediterranean basin. As a result of these changes, Judaism gradually defined itself more as a religion than as a nationality. It created the institution of *conversion*, which allowed foreigners to be admitted into "citizenship." As a religion, Judaism prohibited all marriages between Jews and non-Jews, a prohibition unknown to preexilic Israel (see chap. 2).

Preexilic Israel worshiped in the temple through the slaughter and roasting of animals. A good part of the actual service was performed not by lay Israelites but by the priests, since only priests were permitted entrance into the inner precincts of the temple. Prayer was not a standard part of worship, either in the temple or anywhere else (although, to be sure, in moments of crisis and joy the Israelites knew very well how to pray). For as long as the temple remained standing, Judaism maintained the sacrificial cult, but it also elaborated new liturgies consisting of prayer as well as the recitation and study of Scripture. This mode of worship even influenced the temple cult, but it acquired for itself a special home in a new institution, the synagogue.

Second Temple Judaism also developed a regimen of private worship unknown to preexilic Israel. The word of God was to be the object of constant study and meditation, not only because this activity would teach the conduct that God expected, but also because the very act of study was deemed to be an act of worship. In addition to study, daily prayer became part of the

piety practiced by the religious elite. The commandments of the Torah were elaborated and expanded, thus affording individual Jews opportunity for demonstrating their loyalty to God. The piety of preexilic Israel centered on the group (the people of Israel or the family), while the piety of Second Temple Judaism centered on both the group and the individual. (Throughout this book I shall refer to the democratization or individualization of religion, but at the outset I concede that no ancient society, including ancient Judaism, allocated the individual as much freedom and importance as does modern Western culture. Relative to modern culture, ancient Judaism is not individualistic at all, but relative to preexilic Israel it is.)

Preexilic Israel and Second Temple Judaism also differed in their understanding of *theodicy*, God's administration of justice. Everyone agreed that God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked, but God's accounting methods were the subject of intense scrutiny. Preexilic Israel believed that God administered justice in this world. The righteous and the wicked were not always the direct recipients of God's attentions, because God could reward or punish their offspring in their stead (emphasis on the collective). Second Temple Judaism insisted that God punishes or rewards only those who deserve it and that the conduct of one's ancestors is irrelevant (emphasis on the individual). Since God does not always seem to set matters right in this world, he must do so in the next. Second Temple Judaism therefore elaborated complex schemes of reward and punishment after death or at the end time. Some of these schemes included the resurrection of the dead. Just as God will reestablish justice for the individual, he shall do so for the nation by destroying the yoke of the nations and restoring the sovereignty of the people of Israel. Jerusalem and the temple will be restored to their former glory, and God's anointed one (*messiah*) shall reign securely. All of these *eschatological* doctrines (that is, doctrines concerning the *end time* or ultimate future) are innovations of Second Temple Judaism.

Even as it elaborated new theories to account for God's mysterious ways in administering the world, some segments of Second Temple Judaism admitted that the problem was insoluble. They accounted for the triumph of evil by positing the existence of numerous supernatural beings who opposed God's dominion and everything that was good and true. Mirroring this cosmic struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil is the struggle of good and evil spirits within each person. Some of these schemes are so dualistic that we may debate whether they should be called monotheistic (expressing a belief in one God). Even those Jews who would have nothing of these radical dualistic schemes nevertheless believed in angels and spirits of all sorts. The God of Second Temple Judaism was much more transcendent than the God of preexilic Israel. God needed intermediaries to run the world, and humanity

needed intermediaries to reach God. (All of these theological developments are discussed in chap. 3.)

Preexilic Israel was ruled by kings and guided by prophets; Second Temple Judaism was not. A representative of the Davidic monarchy was the governor of Judea at the beginning of the Persian period, but after him the Davidic monarchy disappears from society, although it exercised a powerful hold on the eschatological imagination. Only in the rabbinic period did alleged descendants of the Davidic line emerge again as communal leaders. Instead of kings, in Second Temple Judaism the priests wielded temporal power. In Maccabean times they even assumed the title "king," but they were ousted by Herod the Great and his descendants. Nevertheless the office of high priest remained a much more visible post than it had been in preexilic Israel.

Prophets no longer enjoyed the prestige and authority that had been theirs in preexilic times. In Second Temple Judaism, prophets became apocalyptic seers, mystics, healers, and holy men. A new type of authority figure emerged to replace the classical prophet: the *scribe*, whose authority derived not from his pedigree and institutional setting (like the priest), not from his charismatic personality and direct contact with God (like the prophet), but from his erudition in the sacred Scriptures and traditions. Various sects as well claimed authority on the basis of their superior erudition. The party against which this superior erudition was brandished usually was the priesthood.

The First Temple, at least after the Deuteronomic reform, was the sole institution in which the Israelites could worship God. The Second Temple likewise claimed exclusivity but faced severe competition. Sects arose in the second century BCE and disappeared only after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. Most sects seem to have argued that the priests were corrupt and that the temple was polluted, or at least unworthy of the exclusiveness and importance it claimed. Each sect presented itself as the true temple and its adherents as the true priests, because only the sect knew how to serve God properly. Other organizations also competed with the temple, but in a more benign fashion. Synagogues and schools were built throughout the land of Israel and the Diaspora. After the destruction of the temple, these institutions became the focal points of Jewish worship and piety (see chaps. 4 and 5).

Second Temple Judaism is a "book religion." At its heart lies the Hebrew Bible, the book that Jews call Tanak (or Tanakh) and Christians call the Old Testament. Preexilic Israel produced the raw materials out of which most of the Bible was constructed, but it was Second Temple Judaism that created the Bible, venerated the very parchment on which it was written, and devoted enormous energies to its interpretation. This process is called *canonization*. The Jews of the Second Temple period realized that they lived in a postclassical age. They studied the books of the ancients and did not try to compete

with them. They turned instead to new literary genres and new modes of expression. This development is at the heart of the shift from Israelite religion to Judaism (see chap. 6).

UNITY AND DIVERSITY

Second Temple Judaism was a complex phenomenon. Judaism changed dramatically during the Persian, Hellenistic, Maccabean, Roman, and rabbinic periods. Generalizations that may be true for one period may not be true for another. In addition, at any given moment Jews practiced their religion in manifold different ways. The Jewish community of Egypt in the first century CE was far from uniform in practice and belief, and we have no reason to assume that any of the Egyptian interpretations of Judaism would necessarily have found favor in the other communities of Greek-speaking Jews throughout the Roman world (e.g., in Rome, Asia Minor, North Africa, and parts of the land of Israel). The Judaism of the land of Israel was striated not only by numerous sects but also by numerous teachers and holy men, each with a band of supporters. We have no reason to assume that any of the Judean interpretations of Judaism would necessarily have found favor in the other communities of Hebrew- or Aramaic-speaking Jews throughout the East (e.g., in Babylonia and parts of Syria). With such diversity, was there any unity? What links these diverse phenomena together and allows them all to be called *Judaism*?

As I remarked above when discussing the link between preexilic Israel and Second Temple Judaism, the most potent force unifying the two is self-perception or self-definition. The Jews saw (and see) themselves as the heirs and continuators of the people of preexilic Israel; the Jews also felt (and still feel) an affinity for their fellow Jews throughout the world, in spite of differences in language, practice, ideology, and political loyalty. Such feelings are normal for minority groups in both ancient and modern times. Because of the Jews' attachment to each other, unsympathetic gentile observers accused (and accuse!) them of hating the rest of humanity (see chap. 2).

This self-perception manifested itself especially in the relations of Diaspora Jewry to the land of Israel and the temple. The Maccabees tried hard to win the support of Diaspora Jewry, basing their campaign to some extent on loyalty to the mother country. They instructed the Jews of the Diaspora through a series of epistles to observe the newly introduced festival of Hanukkah, which celebrated the repurification of the temple in 164 BCE (2 Macc. 1–2). It was during the century of Maccabean rule that 1 Maccabees was translated from Hebrew to Greek, and that Esther was translated into Greek by a priest from Jerusalem. At this same time, the author of the *Letter of Aristeas*

described how seventy-two elders went from Jerusalem to Egypt, where they would translate the Torah into Greek. The Maccabees also reinterpreted Exodus 30:11–16 to mean that every male Jew was obligated to contribute a half shekel to the temple in Jerusalem every year. Herod the Great continued this policy. He appointed as his high priests Jews from Babylonia and Alexandria, the two largest Diaspora communities. When the Jews of Asia Minor needed an advocate to plead their cause before the Romans, Herod sent his chief adviser, who succeeded brilliantly in their behalf.[3]

Even if these overtures were motivated more by a desire for support rather than a sense of kinship, Diaspora Jews, especially those of Egypt, responded to them. They contributed large sums of money to the temple, and by Herodian times at the latest, streamed in the thousands to Jerusalem to witness and participate in the festival rituals of the temple. Philo describes Jerusalem as the "mother city" of the Jews and went there on pilgrimage at least once.[4] The book of Acts mentions that Jews from virtually every part of the world could be found in Jerusalem (Acts 2:5–11).

The mutual loyalty of the Jews of the homeland and the Diaspora had political implications too. During the second century BCE, two Jewish generals of the queen of Egypt refused to lead her army against the Maccabean ruler because, they said, it was impious for them to fight their coreligionists. In addition, they warned that the Jews of Egypt might rebel against the queen if she were to attack their home country. When a person claiming to be the last representative of the Maccabean line came to Rome at the end of the first century BCE, the Jews turned out en masse to show their support. (Alas, he was a pretender.) According to Josephus, the Roman emperor Claudius wrote a public letter protecting the rights of "the Jews throughout the empire under the Romans"; in the eyes of the emperor, all the Jews of the Roman Empire constituted a single entity. During the war of 66–70 CE, some Diaspora Jews supported the revolutionaries and sent them aid. The fact is revealed by a Roman historian of the third century CE who wrote that the rebels were assisted by "their coreligionists from across the Euphrates (that is, Babylonia) and indeed, the entire Roman Empire." After the revolt of 66–70 CE, the Romans imposed a punitive tax (the *fiscus Iudaicus*) on all the Jews of the

3. Jacob Liver, "The Half-Shekel Offering in Biblical and Post-Biblical Literature," *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963): 173–98. High priest from Babylonia: Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 15.2.4 §22 and 15.3.1 §40. High priest from Alexandria: Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 15.9.3 §320. Herod sent Nicolas of Damascus to intercede on behalf of the Jews of Asia Minor: Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 12.3.2 §§125–27 and 16.2.3–5 §§27–65.

4. Philo, *Against Flaccus* 7 §46; idem, *Embassy to Gaius* 36 §281, "mother city"; idem, *On Providence* 2 §64, re pilgrimage.

Roman Empire, not just the Jews of Judea. In the eyes of the Romans, all the Jews were responsible for what had happened.[5]

It is perhaps not surprising that outsiders saw the Jews as a single people or ethnic group. Outsiders seldom see the disagreements, tensions, and rivalries that are so apparent to insiders. It is perhaps more surprising that the Jews of antiquity, in some contexts at least, saw themselves as citizens of one nation and one religion, unaware of, or oblivious to, the fact that they were separated from each other by their diverse languages, practices, ideologies, and political loyalties. But in fact, for all of their disagreements and rivalries, ancient Jews were united by a common set of practices and beliefs that characterized virtually all segments of Jewry (see chap. 3). This common Judaism was the unity within the diversity; both the unity and the diversity are the subjects of this book.

5. Two Jewish generals: Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 13.13.2 §354. Jews of Rome support their Hasmonean favorite: Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 17.12.1 §330. Letter of Claudius: Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 19.5.3 §288. Diaspora Jews support the revolutionaries: Dio Cassius 66.4.3, in Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1974–84), 2:373, no. 430. *Fiscus Iudaicus*: Josephus, *Jewish War* 7.6.6 §218.

Timeline

539–334 BCE	Persian period
516	Second Temple built, 70 years after destruction of Solomon's
mid-5th cent.	Activity of Ezra and Nehemiah
334	Alexander the Great begins his career of conquest
334–63	Hellenistic period
301–200	Judea ruled by Hellenistic kings of Egypt, the Ptolemies
200–167	Judea ruled by Hellenistic kings of Syria and Asia Minor, the Seleucids
167–164	Profanation of the temple of Jerusalem by Antiochus IV Epiphanes; Hasmonean revolt led by Judah the Maccabee
164	Rededication of the temple, with new Festival of Hanukkah
160	Death of Judah the Maccabee
ca. 152–143/2	High priesthood of Jonathan, brother of Judah
142–134	High priesthood of Simon, brother of Judah
134–104	High priesthood of John Hyrcanus I, son of Simon
104–103	High priesthood of Aristobulus I, son of John Hyrcanus
103–76	High priesthood of Alexander Jannaeus, brother of Aristobulus

76–67	Reign of Salome Alexandra, widow of Alexander Jannaeus
67–63	High priesthood of Aristobulus II, son of Salome Alexandra
63	Romans conquer Jerusalem; Judea part of Roman sphere of influence
63 BCE to 4th cent. CE	Roman period
37–4	Herod the Great, a vassal king
4 BCE	Herod the Great dies, his kingdom split into three (Archelaus, Philip, and Herod Antipas)
1 BCE—1 CE	Transition from BCE (before the Common Era) to CE (Common Era)
6 CE	Judea comes under direct Roman rule through procurators
ca. 26–36	Pontius Pilate is procurator/prefect
early 30s	Activity of Jesus
37–41	Emperor Gaius Caligula; attempt to put a statue in the temple
41–44	King Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great
early–mid 50s	Letters and travels of Paul (1 Thessalonians, Galatians, Philippians, Romans, Philemon, 1 and 2 Corinthians)
54–68	Emperor Nero
66	Outbreak of riots in Judea lead to war against the Romans
68	Qumran settlement destroyed by the Romans
70	Jerusalem temple destroyed by the Romans
73 or 74	Masada falls to the Romans
ca. 70	Gospel of Mark
80s	Gospels of Matthew and Luke
80s	Book of Acts (some scholars date Acts ca. 120 or even later)
ca. 80	*Jewish War*, by Josephus

81–96	Emperor Domitian
ca. 80–90	Beginnings of rabbinic activity at Yavneh (Jamnia)
ca. 90–100	Gospel of John
93/94	*Jewish Antiquities*, by Josephus
late 90s	*Against Apion*, by Josephus
90s	Book of Revelation
ca. 96	*Epistle to the Corinthians*, by Clement of Rome, re church hierarchy and discipline, implicit Roman primacy
98–117	Emperor Trajan
ca. 100	*Didache* = *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, first church order
112	Letter of Pliny, governor of Pontus and Bithynia, to Emperor Trajan about Christians
115–117	Revolt of Jews in Egypt, Cyprus, and Cyrene against the Romans
117–135	Emperor Hadrian
ca. 120	Ignatius of Antioch, the term "Christianity"
ca. 130	*Letter of Barnabas*, allegory of Torah Law
132–135	Revolt of Bar Kokhba (Kosba) in Judea; religious persecution of Judaism; expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem and the de-Judaization of Judea
ca. 160	*Martyrdom of Polycarp*, first Christian martyrology
161–180	Emperor Marcus Aurelius
mid-2nd cent.	Rabbinic sages active in Galilee (in Usha)
ca. 160	Justin Martyr (martyred ca. 160), *1 Apology*, *1 Apology*, *Dialogue with Trypho*
ca. 160	Marcion in Rome, pitting the God of Love against the God of Law
ca. 160	Valentinus in Rome, the most distinguished teacher of "Gnosticism"
ca. 160–170	Melito of Sardis, *On Pasch*
3rd quarter of 2nd cent.	In Asia Minor, the seer Montanus, apocalyptic Christianity, renewal of ecstasy and prophecy, rigorism in practice

ca. 178	Irenaeus becomes bishop of Lyon; writes *Against the Heresies*, defends "Orthodoxy," speaks of a New Testament similar to ours, four Gospels, the rule of faith, apostolic succession
ca. 197	Tertullian of Carthage, *Apology*; beginnings of Christian Latin literature
ca. 200	Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* (= *Miscellanies*)
ca. 200	Rabbi Judah the Patriarch edits the Mishnah, the first rabbinic book

2

Jews and Gentiles

The relationship of Jews and Judaism to gentiles and gentile culture is a complex topic that consists of three distinct but interrelated themes: political (to what extent should the Jews submit to foreign domination?), cultural (to what extent should the Jews absorb gentile ideas and practices?), and social (to what extent should Jews mingle and interact with gentiles?). I shall examine each of these separately, beginning with the simplest, the political.

POLITICAL: GENTILE DOMINATION

From 587 BCE, the destruction of the first temple and the exile to Babylonia, until 1948 CE, the establishment of the modern State of Israel, the Jews of both the Diaspora and the land of Israel lived almost exclusively under foreign domination. During extensive portions of the preexilic period, the northern kingdom suffered political subjugation at the hands of Aram and Assyria and the southern kingdom at the hands of Aram, Assyria, Egypt, and Babylonia; but at no point before their actual destruction did either kingdom lose its monarchs or its nominal independence. The dissolution of the northern kingdom in 722 BCE led to the ultimate disappearance of "the ten tribes" (although the Samaritans would later claim, perhaps correctly, to be descendants of these tribes). The dissolution of the southern kingdom, however, did not lead to the disappearance of the Judeans. They returned to their land, rebuilt their temple, and tried to continue as before—but without a king and without political independence.

This political situation raised religious questions: Why did God allow the Jews to be subjugated by gentiles? Why didn't God protect his people? Why

do the gentiles but not the Jews deserve temporal power? The answers to these questions will be treated in the next chapter. Here our theme is the response of the Jews to the political questions raised by subjection to foreign rule: How should the Jews relate to the imperial state? Should they support it, oppose it, or adopt a neutral stance? Should their support or opposition be active or passive?

The answer was provided by Jeremiah. This prophet had warned the inhabitants of Jerusalem that their rebellion against the king of Babylonia was also a rebellion against God. The prophet counseled surrender. Nebuchadnezzar was performing God's will in his assault on the holy city, and the Jews were foolish to believe that they could flout God's will. The Jews were condemned to failure because of their sins; Nebuchadnezzar was merely God's agent for their punishment (Jer. 25). In this conception, Jeremiah transferred to his own day the prophetic interpretation of the fall of Samaria enunciated by Isaiah generations before (Isa. 10).

But Jeremiah also added a different interpretation, a new conception not articulated by previous prophets. The fall of Jerusalem and the triumph of Babylonia are the consequence not of sin and punishment but of immutable fate. God, who controls the destiny of nations and empires, has for undisclosed reasons decided that Babylon shall rise and that Judah and other states shall fall (Jer. 27:2–8). The dominion granted the Babylonians was only temporary; after a predetermined amount of time, whether the three generations of Jeremiah 27 or the "seventy years" of Jeremiah 25:12 and 29:10, the Babylonian Empire will fall and the Jews will return from exile in triumph and glory. The last two prophecies of the book are visions of doom directed against Babylonia (Jer. 50 and 51). In the interim, the Jews were powerless to change the divine decree. Let them support their conquerors and pray for the welfare of the countries in which they live (Jer. 29:5–7).

How much of this was enunciated by Jeremiah during the dark days of the 590s and 580s BCE, and how much was added by later disciples and editors, is not easy to determine, but whatever their origin, these ideas had an enormous impact on subsequent Jewish thought and practice. When the author of Daniel sought to understand the meaning of the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 BCE, he turned to the prophecies of Jeremiah, especially the prophecy concerning the period of "seventy years" (Dan. 9:2). When the author of the *Apocalypse of Baruch*, Josephus, and the rabbis sought to understand the meaning of the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans, they too turned to Jeremiah. Jeremianic influence is particularly noticeable in the apocalypses. These texts, beginning with Daniel, regularly combine the two basic elements of the political theology of Jeremiah: the gentiles rule the Jews to punish them for their sins; the gentiles will continue

to rule the Jews until the immutable sequence of empires has run its course and the predetermined day of their destruction has arrived.[1]

The prophecies of Jeremiah also provide the ideological context for the political behavior of the Jews in antiquity (and indeed, of medieval and modern times as well). When Cyrus the Great of Persia conquered Babylonia in 539 BCE and issued his edict permitting the Jews to return home and rebuild their temple (Ezra 1:1–4), many Jews chose to remain in Babylonia. They had adjusted to life there and were prepared to remain there until God would redeem them. The Jews who returned, or who were preparing to return, to the land of Israel were reassured by an anonymous prophet that an emancipation proclamation issued by a gentile king was precisely the redemption forecast by Jeremiah (Isa. 45:1–13; see too Ezra 1:1). Of all the nations exiled from their lands by the Assyrians and the Babylonians, only the Jews returned to their homeland to rebuild their ancestral temple. For these Jews the redemption promised by Jeremiah was to consist of repatriation and the renewal of the temple cult; perhaps many of them also hoped for a restoration of kingship and political independence, but they were to be disappointed. The Jews who stayed behind in Babylonia, like all the Jews of the Diaspora communities that would flourish during the subsequent centuries, were willing to forgo even their temple and their land. For both communities, then, complete redemption would need to await the promised day of the Lord.

In the meantime, they supported the state. For more than a thousand years, the Jews of antiquity lived under the rule of the Persians, the Hellenistic kingdoms of Egypt and Syria, the Romans and their Christian continuators, and the Parthians/Sassanians. They seldom rebelled, even when provoked. The best illustration of this attitude is the history of the Jews during the reign of Caligula (37–41 CE). In Alexandria, a mob let loose by the Roman governor destroyed Jewish homes and property and threatened the political existence of the Jews of the city. Rather than rebel against the state, however, the Jews sent a delegation to the emperor requesting that he listen to their grievances. While these events were taking place, the governor of Syria, acting on Caligula's instructions, was attempting to erect a statue of the emperor in the Jerusalem temple. Faced with the possibility that the temple might be desecrated, the Jews of Judea threatened to have themselves massacred en masse by the soldiers. The stated goal of these Jews was not the elimination of Roman rule but its amelioration. Ancient Jewish history provides numerous other instances of appeals to the imperial power for the adjudication of some

1. Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Josephus, Jeremiah, and Polybius," *History and Theory* 21 (1982): 366–81.

dispute or the bequest of some favor. The early Christians adopted the same stance toward the state (Rom. 13:1–7).[2]

During the period surveyed by this book, only four exceptions break the overall pattern: the revolt of the Maccabees against Antiochus Epiphanes (167–164 BCE); the two major rebellions of the Jews of Judea against the Romans, the first in 66–73 (or 74) CE, the second in 132–135 CE; and the rebellion of the Jews of Egypt, Cyrene, and Cyprus against Roman rule in 115–117 CE. I shall examine each of these separately.

The Maccabean Rebellion

The Maccabean rebellion began as a struggle for religious liberty. King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, or a group of Jews acting under his authority, desecrated the temple by erecting in the sacred precincts a cult object or an altar of a foreign god, and he tried to compel the Jews to abandon their traditional religious practices (circumcision, Sabbath, abstention from pork, etc.). The goal of the king and his supporters was to remove the features of Judaism that made it different from the other religions of the world. The religious persecution that accompanied this forced "hellenization" (on this term, see below) provoked Judah the Maccabee and his followers to rebel against the state. This was the Jews' first departure from the Jeremianic political tradition, and it was prompted by the state's first departure from a policy of religious toleration. In antiquity, religious persecutions were something of a rarity. The polytheistic and polyethnic empires of both Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean basin tolerated religious and cultic diversity. As long as the peace was maintained and the taxes were paid, the state did not care much about the religious life of its citizens. What provoked the persecution by Epiphanes remains an enigma in spite of intense study by many scholars, but a persecution there was, and the war that it sparked is history's first recorded struggle for religious liberty.

At some point during the struggle, the goals of Judah and his party changed. He was no longer fighting just for religious liberty, but also for political independence. He and his brothers after him sought to make Judea free and independent under the rule of a new dynasty, that of the Maccabees themselves. Even after they regained the temple and put an end to the persecution (164 BCE), they did not cease their struggle. Some Jews supported them in the first phase of the war but abandoned them during the second and third phases. They were prepared to fight against their rulers for the sake of religious freedom, but they were not prepared to support the dynastic pretensions of the

2. The riots in Alexandria are described in detail in Philo's *Against Flaccus*. The Jews threaten to have themselves massacred: Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.8.3 §271.

Maccabees and to create an independent state.[3] Indeed, the state and dynasty that the Maccabees created never succeeded in garnering the support of all the Jews.

Social factors played an important role in this war as well. Mattathias, the patriarch of the clan, and his son Judah the Maccabee were country priests who drew the bulk of their support from the countryside and fought against the well-to-do priests of Jerusalem. The Maccabees expelled or killed many of the "old guard" and advanced "new men" like themselves to become a new aristocracy.

The Rebellion against the Romans (66–74 CE)

The war of 66–74 is similar in many ways to the rebellion of the Maccabees but also very different. The revolutionaries who fomented this war and saw it to its catastrophic conclusion consisted of diverse groups, each with its own leaders, history, and ideology. Some hailed from the countryside, others from the city of Jerusalem. Some were priests, others laypeople. Some were wealthy, others poor. Some had socialist or utopian goals and spent most of their energy in attacking the rich and the hereditary aristocracy. Others, notably some of the priests, fought to maintain and expand their traditional prerogatives and power. Yet others were motivated by an intense hatred of the Romans and a desire to rid the Holy Land of foreign contagion. Many of the revolutionaries believed that the messiah would soon come to redeem Israel and that all the Jews had to do was to get the ball rolling; God and the angelic hosts would do the rest. We may assume that the messianic theories motivating the revolutionaries were as numerous and diverse as the revolutionaries themselves. The Zealots and the Sicarii are the best known of these groups, but there were many others (see chap. 5).

One of the major reasons the Jews lost the war is that they were unable to mount a united front against the Romans. They spent much of their time killing each other rather than fighting the enemy. Thus both the Maccabean revolution and the war of 66–74 were motivated in part by social factors, but the war party of the rebellion against Epiphanes was far more united than the war party of the rebellion against Nero.

The two wars also had quite different beginnings and conclusions. The war of 66–74 was sparked not by a profanation of the temple and a religious persecution but by the administrative incompetence of the Roman procurators, by the fighting between Jews and gentiles in the cities of Judea and Syria, and by the action of some Jewish hotheads who suspended the temple sacrifice on

3. 1 Macc. 2:42; 7:13.

behalf of the emperor. The two wars also had very different outcomes. The rebellion of the Maccabees prevented Judaism from becoming just another local variation of Syrian Hellenism and thereby saved it from extinction. The war of 66–74 removed the institutional foundations of Judaism, brought tremendous destruction on the land of Israel and its inhabitants, and endangered the status of the Jews throughout the Roman Empire; it threatened the very survival of Judaism.

In the eyes of the revolutionaries, Roman rule was as oppressive and intolerable as that of Epiphanes, but many Jews disagreed with this assessment and participated in the war only in its initial chaotic stages, if at all. For every peasant willing to give up everything to fight the Romans there was a peasant who did not want to suffer the inevitable disasters inflicted by war. These Jews felt that the Romans had done nothing to justify a departure from the Jeremianic political tradition. Fighting against the Romans was foolish at best and sinful at worst. God will redeem Israel by sending the messiah, and Israel can do nothing to hasten the appointed time. This point of view was advanced by Flavius Josephus in his work *Jewish War*, our major source for the history of the war and its antecedents. The same perspective is ascribed by rabbinic literature to Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, who is alleged to have left Jerusalem during the siege and to have hailed Vespasian as a man destined to destroy the temple and to become emperor.[4] At his meeting with the soon-to-be emperor, the rabbi quoted from Isaiah (10:34): "And the Lebanon [= the temple constructed from cedars of Lebanon] shall fall by a majestic one [= Vespasian]." The rabbi neglected to inform the Roman that the next verse of the prophecy begins with the messianic prediction "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse." Had Vespasian known the Bible of the Jews, he might not have received the rabbi so kindly.

The Wars of 115–117 and 132–135 CE

The other two exceptions to the Jeremianic political tradition can be treated briefly, not because they are less important than the wars just discussed but because their documentation is so poor. In 115–117 CE, the Jews of Alexandria, the Egyptian countryside, Cyprus, and Cyrenaica (part of modern-day Libya) fought the Romans. Archaeological evidence proves that this was a major uprising that caused much destruction for both Jew and gentile. The Jewish community of Alexandria, one of the largest and most important of the ancient world, was dealt a serious blow. The causes of this war are most

4. The four versions of the story are conveniently available in Jacob Neusner, *Development of a Legend* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970).

obscure. Apparently its root cause was the political tension between Jews and gentiles in the cities of the Greek east, a tension that had flared up many times in the first century CE. Messianic speculations also played an important part.

Equally important and only slightly less obscure is the war of 132–135. The war of 115–117 was the revolt of parts of the Greek Diaspora; there is no reliable evidence that the Jews of the land of Israel participated. By contrast, the war of 132–135 was the revolt of the land of Israel, or to be more accurate, the district of Judea. Its leader was Simeon Bar Kosba, or Kosiba, better known as Bar Kokhba ("Son of a Star"), the name given to him by those who accepted his messianic status. On his coins he styled himself "Simeon the Prince [*Nasi*] of Israel." One ancient historian says that this war was provoked by Hadrian's decision to rebuild Jerusalem as a pagan city. The coinage of the new city, named Aelia Capitolina in honor of Hadrian (whose family name was Aelius) and Jupiter (the god of the capital), shows that the city was indeed established before the outbreak of the rebellion, but whether the construction *caused* the rebellion is a point that cannot be confirmed. Another ancient historian claims that the war was provoked by a prohibition of circumcision. Castration and other mutilation of the male genitalia had been long prohibited by the Romans, but Hadrian extended the prohibition to include circumcision, a step that the Jews found intolerable. Rabbinic literature confirms that during and after the war the Romans forbade circumcision as well as other Jewish practices (including recitation of the Shema, public study of the Torah, and observance of the Sabbath), but whether this persecution was a cause or a consequence of the war is an important point that, again, we cannot determine precisely. In any case, both of these ancient historians agree that this war was provoked by a Roman action against the Jews.[5] In the rabbinic imagination, Hadrian was another Epiphanes, another gentile ruler who sought to destroy Judaism, but for us Hadrian's motives, as well as those of Epiphanes, remain obscure.

The war of Bar Kokhba was the product of internal factors as well. Modern scholars have highlighted the social and economic stress engendered by the war of 66–74 CE. In the wake of that war, the Romans confiscated a great deal of land, leasing or giving it to their supporters and soldiers. This process created a large number of landless poor in Judea, and this group seems to have provided Bar Kokhba the bulk of his support. Another important factor is Bar Kokhba's messianism. Little is known about this either, but the timing of the war is very suggestive. Seventy years after the destruction of the First Temple, the Second Temple was built in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy.

5. Dio Cassius 66.12–15, in Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 2:392–93, no. 440; and *Historia Augusta*, *Life of Hadrian* 14.2, in Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 2:619, no. 511.

The Jews had no doubt that the prophecy would be fulfilled again, but sixty years had already elapsed and nothing had happened. By the 130s CE, the Jews must have been very restive as they contemplated the rapid approach of the septuagintal year. Bar Kokhba was seen by some of his followers as the anointed redeemer who would inaugurate the end by destroying the Romans and rebuilding the temple. In the wake of his defeat, we may imagine the Jews of the second century CE, no less than Daniel in the second century BCE, contemplating with renewed intensity the opaque words of the prophet from Anathoth.

Summary

I end this survey where I began, with Jeremiah. In spite of these four exceptions, the basic political stance of the Jews of both the land of Israel and the Diaspora was not rebellion but accommodation. The Jews must support the state until God sees fit to redeem them. This was the counsel of Jeremiah in the sixth century BCE, of Josephus in the first century CE, and of the rabbis of the second through the twentieth centuries CE. This advice was accepted by the masses of the Jews throughout antiquity. The only principled rejection of it was by the Sicarii and assorted other groups in the first century. Their actions contributed mightily to the war of 66–74, but as we have seen, that war was caused by many different factors and was joined by many different groups. The revolt of the Maccabees and the rebellion of Bar Kokhba were caused, at least in part, by the hostile actions of the ruling power. Even Jeremiah might have approved.

CULTURAL: JUDAISM AND HELLENISM

From biblical until modern times, Jews have seen themselves, and have been seen by others, as a distinct group. The world consists of Jews and gentiles ("the nations"). God chose the Jews from among all the nations and made them his special people. They alone possess the Torah and the quality of holiness. God placed the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens for the nations to worship; but the Israelites are permitted to worship only the true God alone (Deut. 4). Between the "us" of Judaism and the "them" of polytheism was a boundary that separated the holy from the profane. The precise contours of this boundary were never very clear, but one of the characteristic themes of Jewish thought throughout the ages is this sense of contrast between "us" and "them," between Jew and gentile, between the ideas of Judaism and the ideas of the gentile world (whether polytheism, Christianity, or Islam).

The Greeks drew a similar distinction between "Hellenes," the bearers of enlightened culture, and "barbarians," the members of foreign nations, and the demarcation between Jew and gentile is analogous to that between Hellene and barbarian. A barbarian becomes a Hellene by adopting Greek language and culture, and a gentile becomes a Jew by adopting Jewish manners and beliefs. Both Hellenism and Judaism are supranational cultural systems that transcend birth. The analogy ceases at the point where the Jews insist that a gentile converting to Judaism deny the gods and affirm exclusive loyalty to the God of the Jews. Gentiles becoming Jews did not merely add Judaism to their polytheism or apply Jewish terminology to their polytheistic practices; they replaced polytheistic beliefs and practices with Jewish ones. Polytheism was tolerant; monotheism was not. But for all its vaunted intolerance, Judaism was open to converts and was an active participant in the cultural and social life of antiquity.

Hellenism, Hellenization, and Hellenistic Judaism

Modern scholars use the term "Hellenism" in two different ways. In one usage, "Hellenism" means the culture, society, and way of life brought to the peoples of the East by Alexander the Great and his successors. The culture was Hellenistic (the adjective spun from the noun "Hellenism") in that its language was Greek, its literary classics were Greek, its ideas were Greek, its gods were Greek, its social elite was Greek (and Macedonian), and its most distinctive form of social organization (the *polis*) was Greek. Hellenism was the way of life brought by the conqueror and was a great challenge to the Jews and to all the other inhabitants of the East. In this conception "Hellenism," the worship of the Greek gods and the practice of Greek ways, is an antonym to "Judaism," the worship of the God of Israel and the practice of Jewish ways. This conception and usage were inspired by the accounts of the Antiochan persecution and the Maccabean revolt contained in First and Second Maccabees. Indeed, in separate passages 2 Maccabees uses the terms "Judaism" (loyalty to the ancestral ways, 2:21) and its antonym "Hellenism" (adoption of foreign ways, 4:13).

This conception of Hellenism gave rise in turn to the conception of "Hellenistic Judaism" as an antonym for "Palestinian Judaism." According to this view, Hellenistic Jews were the Jews who lived in the Diaspora, spoke Greek, wrote literature in Greek, and adulterated their religion with ideas and practices imported from the Hellenistic world. In contrast, the Jews of Judea lived in the mother country, spoke Hebrew and Aramaic, wrote literature in those languages, and struggled to observe their religion in all its rigor and keep it pure from foreign contagion. This conception was inspired by the figure of

Paul of Tarsus, who seemed to represent the urbane and cosmopolitan (that is, not law-observant) Jew of the Diaspora in contrast to the "orthodox" and legalistic Jews of Judea. New Testament passages like Acts 6:1, which speaks of tension between the "Hebrews" and the "Hellenists" in the early church, contributed to this conception as well.

Many scholars have argued that this interpretive stance does not do justice to the complexities of either Hellenism or Judaism. Whatever it was that Alexander the Great tried to achieve and whatever the purity of the "Hellenism" that he brought with him from Macedon, within a very short time after his death, all the cultures of the East began to contribute to the new creation we call Hellenism. Hellenistic culture was not merely a debased version of the culture of classical Athens. Its substrate was Greek, its language of expression was Greek, its social elites were Greek (Macedonian), but it absorbed ideas and practices from all the cultures with which it came into contact, thereby assuming many and diverse forms. The natives adopted the ways of the Greeks, and the Greeks adopted the ways of the natives, and the results of these two processes may be called "Hellenism."

In the Egyptian countryside, the peasants expressed their traditional hopes and prayers in Greek, even as the Ptolemies adopted the royal ideology of the ancient pharaohs in order to bolster their command over their subjects. Some of the new *poleis* (cities) were bastions of high culture and "Hellenism," but more often than not the Hellenism that reached the marketplace or the farm was a mixture of traditional and novel elements: the ancestral gods were given Greek names, traditional ideas were dressed in Greek garb, and so on. The cultures of the East were too powerful and too attractive to lose their grip on their adherents. Through intermarriage with local women and through veneration of the local gods, the Greeks, in turn, often lost much of their Greekness. When used as a descriptive epithet for the culture of the world from Alexander the Great to the first century BCE or CE, "Hellenism" ought to mean not "Greek culture" but the amalgamation of various cultures. In this conception, "Judaism" and "Hellenism" are *not* antonyms, since by definition Judaism was part of Hellenism and Hellenism was part of Judaism.

This approach tries to get beyond the rhetoric of the Jews of antiquity. If various Jews of antiquity saw Judaism and Hellenism as antithetical, that hardly means that these entities *were* antithetical. Several church fathers expressed a similar hostility toward Hellenism, even after the triumph of the church over polytheism. In a vision Jerome was warned that he was spending too much time on Cicero and not enough on sacred Scripture.[6] Statements like these advance the claim that Christianity is the exclusive source of truth

6. Jerome, *Epistles* 22, available in the Loeb edition of *Select Letters of St. Jerome*.

and has no need for classical culture. But we would err badly if we deduced from these texts that Jerome and the other fathers who make similar pronouncements viewed classical culture as antithetical to Christianity. Similarly, we cannot deduce from Maccabean and rabbinic ideology and rhetoric the real relationship of Judaism to Hellenism. Nor can we generalize from Paul, that very unusual Jew.

This conception of Hellenism implies a definition of "Hellenistic Judaism." All the varieties of Judaism in the Hellenistic period, of both the Diaspora and the land of Israel, were hellenized, that is, were integral parts of the culture of the ancient world. Some varieties were more hellenized than others—that is, some were in more intense contact with non-Jews than were others—but none was an island unto itself. It is a mistake to imagine that the land of Judea preserved a "pure" form of Judaism and that the Diaspora was the home of adulterated or diluted forms of Judaism. The term "Hellenistic Judaism" makes sense, then, only as a chronological indicator for the period from Alexander the Great to the Maccabees or perhaps to the Roman conquests of the first century BCE.

Since I find the second approach far more convincing than the first, I shall avoid the term "Hellenistic Judaism" for the rest of this book. As we shall see, valid distinctions can be drawn between the Judaism of the Diaspora and that of Judea, between the Judaism of Greek-speaking Jews and that of Hebrew- and Aramaic-speaking Jews. These distinctions, however, are not between "Hellenistic Judaism" and "non-Hellenistic Judaism"; they are variations within the hellenized Judaism of antiquity.

Judaism and Hellenistic Culture

The basic problem that confronted all the Jews of antiquity was how to preserve Jewish identity while living within Hellenistic culture. How could they balance the conflicting claims of universalism and particularism, the desire to be part of the larger world and the desire to be separate and distinct? Where was the line that separated the licit foreign element that enriched and fructified from the illicit foreign element that threatened and destroyed? This was a perpetual dilemma, not only for the Jews in their homeland but especially for the Jews in the Diaspora.

The problem was not new. Even in preexilic times, the Israelites had to determine the extent to which they could draw on the riches of the cultures among which they lived. King Solomon built the temple of God with the aid of Phoenician architects and on the standard plan of Syrian temples (1 Kgs. 5–7). The psalmist modeled some of his poems on Canaanite hymns to Baal (Ps. 29) and Egyptian hymns to Aton (Ps. 104). The author of Proverbs drew

upon the wisdom of Amenemope (Prov. 22:17–23:11). When the Israelites began to worship Baal alongside their own God and to incorporate Canaanite practices into their religion, however, the prophets objected vociferously.

Complicating all these issues was the political setting. The lack of political autonomy increased the need for the erection of clear boundaries that would safeguard the group's identity. In preexilic times, Ahaz the king of Judah replaced the altar in the temple with an altar constructed like one he saw in Damascus (2 Kgs. 16:10–18), thereby indicating his fealty to his master, the king of Assyria. Political subjugation brought in its wake enormous pressure to conform to the ways of the conqueror, even if the conqueror did not actually initiate a persecution.

In the Second Temple period, the integration of the Jews in the Hellenistic world manifested itself in three areas: material culture, language, and philosophy and way of life. I shall consider each of these separately.

Material Culture

The pottery, clothing, art, architecture, and the myriad other details that constituted the realia of Jewish life were all standard Hellenistic types or variations on them. That this was the case in the Greco-Roman Diaspora should occasion no surprise, but it was also the case in Judea. Cities were built on the Greek pattern. The elders no longer sat at the gate as in preexilic times, but in the *agora*, or central plaza, of the city, an architectural feature unknown to the Hebrew Bible. All of Herod the Great's building projects, including the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem, were in the Hellenistic style of the Near East, and this fact is not to be attributed to the idiosyncrasy of one mad ruler. Josephus remarks that the buildings of one Galilean village closely resembled those of Tyre, Sidon, and Berytus (Beirut). All the coins issued by the Jews, from the Maccabees to the Herodian kings to the revolutionaries of 66–70 CE, were minted on the Tyrian standard, which was widespread throughout the Hellenistic East.[7]

Language

The essence of hellenization, of course, is the Greek language; the root meaning of the verb "to hellenize" is to speak Greek, or to speak Greek properly. In the Diaspora, the triumph of the Greek language was complete. Hebrew was virtually unknown to Egyptian Jewry. Even Philo, certainly the most

7. On Herod, see Duane Roller, *The Building Program of Herod the Great* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). On the village of Chabulon, see Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.18.9 §504. On coins, see Yaakov Meshorer, *Jewish Coins of the Second Temple Period* (Tel Aviv: Am Hassefer, 1967).

learned and literate Jew produced by the Jewish community of Alexandria, was no Hebraist; in all likelihood his knowledge of Hebrew did not extend beyond select words and phrases of the Torah. Elsewhere in the Diaspora, the situation was the same. Virtually all the inscriptions engraved by Diaspora Jewry, from Egypt to Rome to Asia Minor, were in Greek. In Rome, a few were in Latin, and a few epitaphs append the Hebrew word *shalom*, but again there is no sign that the Jews of these places spoke or knew any Semitic language. The earliest literary work produced by Diaspora Jewry was a translation of the Torah into Greek, known as the Septuagint (third century BCE). By the second century BCE, the Jews of Egypt were writing scholarly essays, philosophical tracts, and poetry based on this Greek translation. As far as we know, Greek was the exclusive language of literary expression for Diaspora Jewry.

In the land of Israel, the situation is much more complicated because Greek had to compete with Hebrew and Aramaic, but even here many Jews spoke and wrote Greek. The Maccabees arranged for the translation of 1 Maccabees from Hebrew into Greek (this translation survives; the Hebrew original has completely disappeared). A Jew from Jerusalem translated the book of Esther into Greek. The Wisdom of Ben Sira, a work written in Hebrew by a sage around 200 BCE, was translated into Greek by the author's grandson. By the first century CE, if not before, Judean authors like Josephus and his archrival Justus of Tiberias were writing original compositions in Greek. Greek documents have been found at Qumran and constitute a large part of a private family archive that was discovered in the Judean desert and dates from the first quarter of the second century CE (the Babatha archive). Bar Kokhba wrote some of his letters in Greek. In the burial caves at Beth Shearim in lower Galilee, which were in use during the third and fourth centuries CE, most of the epitaphs are in Greek, although most of the inscriptions of contemporary synagogues are in Hebrew and Aramaic.

Even in rabbinic circles, the Greek language had an enormous impact. This is evidenced not only by the thousands of Greek (and Latin) words in the rabbinic lexicon and by the fact that in a synagogue of Caesarea in rabbinic times the Shema was recited in Greek, but also by the fact that some rabbinic Jews needed a Greek translation of the Bible that was more faithful to the Hebrew text than was the Septuagint. According to both Christian and rabbinic legend, a convert to Judaism named Aquila translated the Bible anew into Greek under rabbinic aegis, his goal being a faithful word-for-word translation. Whether there is any truth to this legend is hard to establish, but the important point is that the translation attributed to Aquila is a revision of the Septuagint in the direction of the emerging newly standardized Hebrew text. Qumran fragments show that revisions in this direction were being done

already in the first century CE, demonstrating the existence in Judea of a group of Jews who needed a Greek translation of the Bible, but a translation that would be closer to the Hebrew original than that produced by Diaspora Jewry.[8]

The Greek language, then, had an enormous impact in Judea during both Second Temple and rabbinic times. As far as we know, however, Hebrew remained the primary language of literary expression. The Qumran scrolls demonstrate that Hebrew was the original language of most of the works written in Judea between the period of the Maccabees and the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. The same pattern continued into rabbinic times. The Mishnah and ancillary works were all written in Hebrew. To what extent Hebrew was a spoken language in Judea in Second Temple and rabbinic times remains a disputed question. It is likely that many of the people used Aramaic.

As a result of the influence of the Aramaeans, knowledge of the Aramaic language became widespread among the political elite of Judea even in pre-exilic times (2 Kgs. 18:26). By the fourth or third century BCE, it became a literary language for the Jews (Dan. 2–7, Tobit, and *Enoch* were written in Aramaic) and would so remain until the Middle Ages. By the first century BCE, it was used for the translation and paraphrase of Scripture. In rabbinic times, from the third century CE onward in both the land of Israel and Babylonia, Aramaic was the language of both scholars and boors; it was used for Bible translations and legal discussions, synagogue homilies and prayers, popular storytelling, and magical incantations.

The survival and later efflorescence of Hebrew and Aramaic are sometimes taken as proof that the Jews of Judea both before and after 70 CE resisted the world of Greek culture. There is some truth to this generalization, but we must avoid both simplification and exaggeration. Language certainly is a critical part of human identity, but the fact that some Jews continued to use a Semitic language hardly proves that they sought to separate themselves from the culture of the world around them. The Jews were not the only people of the Near East to preserve their ancestral language. The centuries that witnessed the height of rabbinic creativity also witnessed the birth of Armenian, Coptic, and Syriac literatures, all of which were heavily imbued with Greek ideas. By the Byzantine period, knowledge of the Greek language was no longer a necessary criterion for hellenization.

8. Synagogue in Caesarea: *y.* [Yerushalmi, Jerusalem Talmud] *Sotah* 7.1 21b. On "Aquila's Version," see Leonard Greenspoon in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:320–21, summarizing the work of D. Barthélmy.

Philosophy and Way of Life

All the Jews of antiquity were hellenized to some degree. All shared in the material culture of the larger world, and all were exposed to the Greek language. But usually the term "hellenization" involves more than just pots, pans, and language. It also involves a way of thought and a way of life. To what extent did the Jews of antiquity adopt and adapt the ideas and practices of the world around them? How did they reconcile the truths of their tradition with the truths of contemporary culture?

Some Jews in both Israel and the Diaspora sought to obliterate all distinctions between themselves and the gentiles. These Jews are usually called "apostates" (rebels). Their reasons were diverse. Some, hoping to make a career in the civil service, felt that their Judaism was an obstacle in their path. The most spectacular example of this type is Tiberius Julius Alexander, the nephew of the philosopher Philo, who abandoned his Judaism for the sake of a government career. He succeeded brilliantly; he was in turn procurator of Judea, prefect of Alexandria, and a member of Titus's general staff during the siege of Jerusalem. Some apostates were motivated by the desire to partake fully of the delights of Hellenistic civilization. Particularly onerous in their eyes were the laws that prevented social and sexual intercourse between Jew and gentile. They wanted to "belong." Others were "uprooted intellectuals" who could accept the truths of Greek philosophy but had difficulty accepting the truths of Judaism. In a polytheistic world they could not believe in monotheism, in a society that revered philosophy they could not accept revelation, and in a universal culture they could not abide distinctiveness. These three categories of apostasy are not mutually exclusive. Sometimes it is hard to determine precisely which motives were operative in any given case; indeed, sometimes it is hard to determine whether the term "apostate" is appropriate at all.[9]

During the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, a group of Jews known to modern scholarship as "the extreme hellenizers" tried to remove the distinctive characteristics of Judaism in order to make it indistinguishable from other forms of Semitic-Hellenistic polytheism. Their program was to "go and make a covenant with the Gentiles around us, for since we separated from them many disasters have come upon us" (1 Macc. 1:11). Whether they were motivated primarily by social, economic, political, or religious desires is difficult to determine. The supporters of the Maccabees had no doubt, however, that these Jews, whatever their motivations, were sinners and rebels. But it is likely that these Jews—who included many priests, high priests, and

9. This paragraph is much indebted to Harry Wolfson, *Philo* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947; repr., 1968), 1:73–85.

aristocrats—were not attempting to destroy Judaism but to reform it. Two centuries later in Alexandria, Philo describes a group of "extreme allegorists" who argued that the laws of the Torah, including the laws of circumcision, Sabbath, and forbidden foods, were meant to be observed not literally but allegorically (an interpretation that would find its way into some elements of early Christianity). These Jews obviously believed that they were remaining loyal to the Torah all the while they were not observing its laws in the normally accepted fashion, but Philo castigates them. Like the "extreme hellenizers," they, too, were trying to remove the distinctive characteristics of Judaism.[10]

The number of apostates in Jewish antiquity, if we exclude Jewish Christians and Christian Jews, was never very large. Both in the Diaspora and in Israel, even in rabbinic times, there were always some Jews who were prepared to obliterate the distinction between Jew and gentile and between Judaism and Hellenistic culture. Universalistic trends had always existed in Judaism, even in preexilic times, especially in intellectual circles. The Wisdom literature of the Bible (Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes) completely ignores the distinctive elements of Israelite cult, history, and theology; freely draws on the wisdom literature of the ancient East, especially Egypt; and emphasizes the common morality and ethics applicable to all peoples. Thought of this type had an enormous influence on later Jewish thinkers, notably Philo and the rabbinic authors of the Mishnaic tractate *Avot* (Fathers). Other universalistic trends in ancient Judaism will be discussed below. But the universalism of these apostates was different from the universalism of the Wisdom school and the other Jewish philosophers, because the apostates actualized their universalism and surrendered their Jewish identity. For the vast majority of Jews, this was not an acceptable response to the challenges of the Hellenistic world.

For most Jews, the ideal solution was to create a synthesis between Judaism and Hellenism. The rabbis expressed this beautifully in a comment inspired by Genesis 9:27, "May the beauty of Japheth [= the Greeks] dwell in the tents of Shem [= the Jews]."[11] Since the definition of Hellenism is complex and elusive, as I discussed above, the statement that the Jews were influenced by Hellenistic culture or that they borrowed this or that idea from Hellenism does not necessarily imply that they consciously and purposefully imported material from abroad. For some Jews, especially in the Diaspora, the adaptation of Judaism to contemporary culture may have been a conscious process. For others it was not. Sometimes it is hard to determine whether a phenomenon that

10. Philo, *On the Migration of Abraham* §89–93. For a similar allegorical reading of the laws of the Torah, see the *Epistle of Barnabas*.

11. *B.* [Bavli, Babylonian Talmud] *Megillah* 9b.

appears in both Judaism and other forms of Hellenistic culture is to be attributed to the influence of one upon the other or to parallel development. As a participant group in Hellenistic culture, the Jews gave and received. What the Jews gave I shall discuss in the next section. Here I shall discuss what the Jews received, as well as developments in Judaism that are paralleled by developments elsewhere in Hellenistic culture.

Many scholars have noted that the religions and philosophies of the Hellenistic period share a concern for the individual, whereas the religions and philosophies of classical Greece centered more on the *polis*, the collective. The same development can be seen in the Judaism of the Hellenistic period (see chap. 3). The concern for the fate of the individual in both this world and the next, the elaboration of a system of requirements for the individual to follow (prayer, Torah study, performance of the commandments, etc.), and the creation of new social structures in which the individual figures prominently (school, synagogue, and sect)—all these developments attest to a new ethos in Judaism, an ethos closely paralleled by, and perhaps derived from, Hellenistic culture.

Much of the Jewish literature of the Hellenistic period follows Greek literary forms and/or the canons of Greek taste (see chap. 6). This fact is not particularly surprising for works written in Greek in the Diaspora, but it is no less true for many of the works written in Hebrew or Aramaic in the land of Israel. The book of Judith, originally written in Hebrew, is a typical Greek novella or romance, complete with a heroine in distress, narrow escapes, and a happy ending. The *Genesis Apocryphon*, an elaboration in Aramaic of the stories of Genesis, employs Hellenistic literary techniques (warning dreams, the pathos of the hero) to dress up its narrative. One member of the Maccabean circle in Jerusalem wrote an epic poem in Greek, apparently paraphrasing the Bible.[12] The commentary form, which is first attested (for Jews) in the Qumran scrolls and later was to play such an important role in rabbinic culture, also is of Hellenistic origin. All of these works are fiercely loyal to Jewish tradition, but all of them are expressions of Greek literary taste. The beauty of Japheth did indeed reside in the tents of Shem.

Now I turn from the *form* of the literature to its *content*. I begin with philosophy. The God of the Hebrew Bible is very different from the supreme God of Plato or Aristotle. The former is an anthropomorphic being capable of anger, joy, and other emotions who created the world and continues to direct human affairs. The God of the philosophers, however, was a much less human and much more abstract figure, incapable of emotion, and far removed

12. Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Sosates the Jewish Homer," *Harvard Theological Review* 74 (1981): 391–96.

from the daily concerns of humanity (see chap. 3). Many Jews tried to combine these two conceptions, or, more precisely, to reinterpret the God of the Bible in the light of the ideas of the philosophers. In his numerous essays on the Torah, Philo tried to demonstrate that the God of Judaism was very like the God of Plato and that the stories of Genesis are not mere amusing diversions but hide profound philosophical truths. This allegorical approach to Scripture was developed even further by Origen, Ambrose, and other fathers of the church, but its first great exponent was Philo, and its origins reach back to Alexandrian Jewry of the third century BCE.

The impact of philosophy on Judaism went much deeper than the exegetical essays of Philo. For Jews who wrote in Greek, much of their thinking on the questions of fate, free will, immortality, and divine providence was influenced by, or at least was expressed in, the terminology of Greek philosophy. Many authors, even those of a decidedly nonphilosophic character (like Josephus), present Judaism as a "philosophy," a system of practice and thought that cultivated Greeks could appreciate and admire. These writers emphasize aspects of Judaism that we call "ethics" and "morality," arguing either implicitly or explicitly that the ideal way of life recommended by Greek legislators and thinkers had been put into practice by only one people, the Jews.[13]

The interaction with the Hellenistic world was not limited to the realm of ideas. In the public sphere, Jewish life—not only in the Diaspora but also in the land of Israel—was radically transformed by the building of cities and by the creation of new urban elites. Adopting a page from Greek political theory, Judah the Maccabee had the people declare by acclamation that Hanukkah was to be celebrated annually in commemoration of the great victory over Epiphanes (1 Macc. 4:59). A generation later, Simon the Maccabee had himself declared the high priest through acclamation (1 Macc. 14:41). In Greek political theory, the power to declare festivals, appoint priests, and so on, was vested in the people (the *demos*), but such an idea was completely foreign to Judaism. The Maccabees, the alleged opponents of foreign ways, adopted a Hellenistic practice for their own ends. By Roman times, an important political body of the land was known by a Greek name (*synedrion*, or, in Hebrew pronunciation, *sanhedrin*).

Private life, too, was enriched by Hellenistic social forms. Schools, clubs, and associations were common features in the social and civic life of the Hellenistic world, including the social and civic life of the Jews (see chap. 4). The impact of the new ways is evident in some of the most basic social

13. On Judaism as a philosophy, see, e.g., Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.1.2 §11. That the ideals of Judaism match those of Greek philosophy is the thesis of the last part of his work *Against Apion*.

forms. According to the custom in force in preexilic times, a custom that was almost universal in the ancient Near East, a groom "buys" his bride from his prospective father-in-law by tendering a "bride-price." Already in the third century BCE, the Jews began to follow the Greek practice (shared by the Romans) according to which a groom receives money or goods (a dowry) from his prospective father-in-law in advance of the marriage. The shift from bride-price to dowry may well be connected with other major developments (e.g., the shift from polygamy to monogamy) that may have been occasioned by the entrance of the Jews into Hellenistic society.[14]

Summary

"To hellenize or not to hellenize" was not a question the Jews of antiquity had to answer. They were given no choice. The questions that confronted them were "How?" and "How far?" How should Judaism adapt itself to meet the new conditions of the age? How far could Judaism go in absorbing foreign ways and ideas before it was untrue to itself and lost its identity? These were key questions the Jews of antiquity had to answer, and they answered them in numerous and diverse ways. Some were prepared to become "apostates" by abandoning all those beliefs and practices that made Judaism distinctive. Others adopted an anti-Hellenistic stance, but their rhetoric cannot mask their willingness to follow Hellenistic ways as long as those ways did not threaten Judaism. Even if the majority of Jews agreed that the golden mean was best, the diversity of their responses indicates that the precise definition of this golden mean remained elusive.

SOCIAL: JEWS AND GENTILES

The Jews of both the Diaspora and the land of Israel had an uneasy relationship with their environment. For the most part they were willing to support the imperial state and to partake of the cultural bounty of the Hellenistic world, but they were unwilling to surrender their identity. They wished to "belong" but at the same time to remain distinct. Support for the state was not to be confused with the abnegation of nationalist dreams. Hellenization was not to be confused with assimilation. This tension is also evident in the social relations between Jews and gentiles.

14. Elias Bickerman, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 1:201–15; Tracy Lemos, *Marriage Gifts and Social Change in Ancient Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism

In order to maintain their distinctiveness and identity, most Jews of the ancient world sought to separate themselves from their gentile neighbors. In the cities of the East, they formed their own autonomous ethnic communities, each with its own officers, institutions, and regulations (see chap. 4). Some cities, notably Alexandria and Rome, had neighborhoods inhabited mostly by Jews. (These were not "ghettos" but "ethnic neighborhoods.") Following the lead of Ezra, the Jews of the Second Temple period grew more and more intolerant of marriages with foreigners. Even Philo admired the zeal of Phinehas, who killed an Israelite chieftain for consorting publicly with a Midianite woman (Num. 25).[15] The Jews also buried their dead separately, thus maintaining separation from gentiles in death as in life. They refused to participate in public ceremonies that involved worship of the gods or of the emperor; in other words, they refused to participate in practically all the communal events of gentile society. The ancient empires tolerated this behavior; Josephus quotes a series of documents from Julius Caesar, the emperor Augustus, and other high Roman officials protecting the Jews' right to observe their ancestral customs, including the right to observe the Sabbath and not to serve in the army.[16] In the polyethnic Hellenistic and Roman Empires, national distinctiveness and loyalty to ancestral customs were not unusual, but the Jews carried their separateness to unusual lengths. In particular, the refusal of the Jews to participate in any religious ceremony, including emperor worship, was unparalleled, because the Jews alone of all the peoples of antiquity were monotheists who believed in a jealous God.

But their exclusiveness and separation did not prevent the Jews from seeking civic equality with their gentile neighbors. During the first century of our era, severe disturbances broke out in Alexandria, Caesarea (in Judea), Antioch (in Syria), and several cities of western Asia Minor (modern Turkey). The details behind these events are obscure, but most scholars agree that the Jewish communities of these places antagonized certain elements of the local population by demanding both tolerance and equality. They asked that the city continue to recognize their autonomous communal organization while also extending them the rights of citizenship. (These rights included a certain degree of political power, various tax advantages, and increased prestige.) The city refused. "If the Jews wish to be Alexandrians, let them worship the gods of the Alexandrians" was the reply, and the battle was joined.[17] In Alexandria, the troubles first erupted in 38 CE. There was a virtual war between the Jews and the mob of the city. Synagogues were desecrated, Jewish shops and homes

15. Philo, *Life of Moses* 1.55 §§300–4.
16. Julius Caesar et al.: Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 14.10.1–26 §§185–267.
17. Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.6 §65; cf. idem, *Jewish Antiquities* 12.3.2 §§125–26.

were pillaged, and many Jews were killed. The situation did not quiet down until 41 CE, when the emperor Claudius declared that the Jews should not seek more than their due. But the tension between the Jews and Alexandrians continued to fester and broke out anew (not only in Alexandria but also in cities throughout Judea and Syria) in 66 CE, on the eve of the great rebellion. In Alexandria and Cyrene, it reached its climax in the war of 115–117 CE.

To support their position, the opponents of the Jews, especially in Alexandria, resorted to anti-Jewish propaganda. Their leader, Apion, wrote a book that attacked the Jews on three fronts. First, he contended that the history of the Jews demonstrates that they are an ignoble lot with an ignoble history. In particular, Apion said, the exodus from Egypt was really an expulsion, since the Israelites were lepers, and the pharaoh threw them out so that they would not infect the people and shrines of Egypt. Second, the Jews are not, never were, and have no right to be Alexandrian citizens. Third, the Jewish religion is not a religion at all but at best an agglomeration of silly superstitions, and at worst a conspiracy aimed at Greeks and at all those who share Greek values. In particular, Apion said, when Antiochus Epiphanes entered the temple in Jerusalem, he discovered that the Jews annually hold a festival at which they slaughter a Greek youth, especially fattened for the occasion, and eat his corpse while swearing fearsome oaths of hostility toward all Greeks. (A slightly different version of this accusation, known as the "blood libel," was later raised by the Romans against Christians, and in the twelfth century by Christians against Jews.)

How is this ferocious outburst against the Jews to be explained? To dismiss it as anti-Semitism will not work, because "anti-Semitism" did not exist in antiquity. This term was coined in 1879 by a German writer who wished to bestow "scientific" respectability on the hatred of Jews by arguing that Jews and Germans belonged to different species of humanity ("races"). But the ancients did not have anything resembling a racial theory. They observed that Ethiopians were dark skinned and that Germans were pale skinned. They further observed that different nations had different moral characteristics, both good and bad (Egyptians are superstitious, Arabs are thieves, Greeks are fast-talking tricksters, and so on), but neither the Greeks nor the Romans ever explained these differences by appeal to what we would call a racial theory. Instead, they argued that climate, soil, and water determine both the physical and moral characteristics of nations. Therefore the notion of anti-Semitism is inappropriate to antiquity, even if many of the motifs and arguments of the anti-Jewish literature of antiquity are familiar from their subsequent reuse in the anti-Semitism of the medieval and modern worlds.

Furthermore, the social and economic tensions that produced the virulent anti-Semitism of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe did not exist in

antiquity. There were no nation-states in antiquity in which the Jews were an unassimilable foreign element. The Jews of antiquity had a variegated economic life in both the Diaspora and the land of Israel. They were farmers, laborers, artisans, soldiers. Most of them, like the vast majority of the people of antiquity, were very poor. Not a single ancient text says or implies that the Jews were hated or feared because of their economic power. The association of Jews with moneylending was still centuries in the future, and the rise of the Jewish middle classes did not begin until the nineteenth century.

Finally, an unmistakable component of modern anti-Semitism is its theological justification developed by Christianity. But the polytheists of antiquity had no reason to believe that the Jews were cursed by the gods or were in league with the devil. When they accused the Jews of atheism, they were objecting to the fact that the Jews refused to worship the gods of the gentiles. Even those Greeks and Romans who despised Judaism respected its exclusiveness as an ancestral usage that the Jews themselves were not free to change. The Christians, too, were accused of atheism, and since they could not defend their refusal by appeal to ancestral custom, they were persecuted. But when the Christians accused the Jews of being "Christ-killers" and of denying the Trinity, they meant something much more serious. In their eyes the Jews were cursed by God, doomed to hell, and denied salvation in the hereafter, concepts that are foreign to the perception of Judaism by the polytheists of antiquity.

In sum, anti-Semitism did not exist in antiquity, but anti-Judaism did. Anti-Judaism was the consequence of political strife between the Jews and their neighbors in both Judea and the Diaspora. The revolt of the Maccabees against the Seleucid Empire marks the entrance of the Jews into the rough-and-tumble world of the politics of the Hellenistic world. Before that point, most of the references to Jews in Greek literature are favorable. In the fourth and third centuries BCE, many Greeks thought that the Jews were a race of "philosophers," like the Brahmans of India. After the rise of the Maccabees, the literary tradition becomes ambivalent. Positive evaluations persist, especially of Judaism's avoidance of images in worship, but negative voices predominate. In order to justify his attack on the temple of Jerusalem, Antiochus Epiphanes had his "propaganda bureau" attempt to prove that the Jewish temple was not a real temple and that the Jewish religion was not a real religion. Many of the anti-Jewish stories first circulated by the Seleucid government to justify Epiphanes were reused centuries later to justify other actions against the Jews. The stories were retold by Apion to justify his opposition to the Jews of Alexandria and by Tacitus (a Roman historian of the early second century CE) to justify the Roman destruction of the temple in 70 CE. The persecution of Judaism by Epiphanes, the attack on Alexandrian Jewry by the mob, and the destruction of the temple by Titus were each caused by local

factors and not by some deep-rooted "anti-Judaism." Nevertheless, the literary propaganda spawned by these conflicts helped shape the "anti-Semitic" image of the Jew of later generations.

Philo-Judaism

We shall err badly, however, if we imagine that all social relations between Jews and gentiles were characterized by "clannishness" on the part of the Jews and anti-Judaism on the part of the gentiles. The period from the middle of the second century BCE to the first part of the second century CE (approximately from the Maccabees to Bar Kokhba), which witnessed the growth of political and literary hostility toward the Jews, also witnessed the development of admiration and veneration for many Jewish rituals and ideas. It was the age of philo-Judaism (love of Judaism) as well as anti-Judaism, of conversion to Judaism as well as hatred of Judaism. Although the Jews sought to keep themselves separate and distinct, they also were eager to accept and retain gentile converts. Indeed, some of the anti-Jewish literature of this period is motivated (in addition to political motives just discussed) by a desire to discourage conversion to Judaism. The literature that evinces a dislike of Judaism paradoxically also confirms Judaism's powerful attraction.

Conversion to Judaism

The Hebrew Bible is not familiar with either a general prohibition of intermarriage or the conversion of gentiles to Judaism. Deuteronomy 7:1–4 prohibits the marriage of Israelites with the seven Canaanite nations; and 23:2–9 prohibits the members of four other nations "to enter the assembly of the LORD," which might be a prohibition of intermarriage (see 1 Kings 11:1–2). Other nations, apparently, were not bound by any prohibition. In contrast with Deuteronomy, Leviticus is not familiar with any prohibition of intermarriage, even for Canaanites. Upon his return from Babylonia in 458 BCE, Ezra tried to compel the priests and nobles of Jerusalem to divorce their foreign wives, whose abominable ways resembled those of the Canaanites (Ezra 9:1–2), but it is not until the Maccabean period that a general prohibition is attested (see below).

The explanation for this development is not the sudden irruption of intolerance and particularism into the Jewish psyche but the new social setting of the community. In preexilic times, when the Israelites were a nation living on their own land with their own king, they had nothing to fear from an occasional intermarriage with foreigners. The Canaanites, who still lived in substantial numbers on the land, were the sole group that was prohibited (according to Deuteronomy) because it was the sole group that posed a threat to Israelite identity. (Of course, according to Judg. 3:5–6 many Israelites

married Canaanites anyway.) The primary ingredient in Israelite identity was *nationality*, that is, birth (*natio* in Latin). Even if many Israelites condemned intermarriage as something improper (Judg. 14:3), it was never outlawed, and the children of intermarriages were never expelled from the community.

In preexilic times, conversion to Judaism did not yet exist because birth is immutable. An Ammonite or an Aramaean could no more become an Israelite in preexilic times than an American can become a citizen of Liechtenstein in our own. Mere residency in the land does not confer citizenship, and a social system that defines a citizen solely as the child of a citizen has no legal mechanism by which to assimilate a foreigner. Biblical law frequently refers to the "resident alien" (*ger* in Hebrew) who is grouped with the widow, the orphan, and the Levite. All of these are landless and powerless, and all are the potential victims of abuse. (An American analogy to the *ger* is the Chicano farmworker; a European analogy is the Turkish laborer in Germany.) The Bible nowhere states how a *ger* might ameliorate that status and become equal to the native born, because there was no legal institution by which a foreigner could be absorbed by a tribal society living on its ancestral land. Resident aliens in the cities of pre-Hellenistic Greece (known as *metics*) fared no better.

The exile of 587 BCE, however, brought in its wake the destruction of the old order. The tribal structure was gone; the Jews who returned from Babylon to Judea were organized as clans, not tribes. Their ritual classification was "priest, Levite, and Israelite," the classification that has endured in traditional Judaism to this day. Land ownership was no longer tied to membership in a tribe. Many Jews, we know, did not return at all but remained in Babylonia. Within a few centuries, the Diaspora in the East was complemented by an extensive Diaspora in the West. Political autonomy was lost. In this new setting, the old conception of Israelite nationhood no longer made sense. The Jews began to redefine themselves as a culture, a way of life, a religion, and it was Judaism, not the religion of preexilic Israel, that prohibited intermarriage but permitted conversion.

The transition is clearly under way by the period of Ezra and is more or less complete by the period of the Maccabees. Ezra tried to expel from the Jerusalem community about 113 foreign women and the children whom they had borne to their Jewish husbands (Ezra 10). Several texts of the Maccabean period speak of intermarriage as a capital crime. One Roman historian writing about the year 100 CE remarks that Jewish men refrain from intercourse with foreign women. Although we may be sure that many Jews, especially in the Diaspora, did intermarry, most Jews did not. As Philo explained, basing his remarks on Deuteronomy 7:3–4, intermarriage leads to impiety and disloyalty to God. Intermarriage was a threat to the religious community.[18]

18. Texts of the Maccabean period: *Jubilees* 30. Roman historian: Tacitus, *Histories*

But these centuries saw the creation of an institutionalized method for the admixture of gentiles. Ezra was still unfamiliar with the notion of "conversion," but some of his contemporaries were discussing the idea. One prophet assured the "foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants" that they would not be excluded from the rebuilt temple but would be gathered to God's people (Isa. 56:6–8). Several prophets predicted that in the end of days, foreigners would join in the worship of the true God in Jerusalem, either as servants of the Israelites or as independent worshipers. One prophet declared that the resident aliens "will join them [the Israelites] and attach themselves to the house of Jacob" (Isa. 14:1); another even predicted that some gentiles would become priests and Levites (Isa. 66:21)!

In the Maccabean period, these visions of the end began to influence the behavior of Jews and gentiles in this world. The book of Judith, a romance written or at least redacted during the second century BCE, describes the conversion of an Ammonite general to Judaism: "When Achior saw all that the God of Israel had done [to protect his people], he believed firmly in God. So he was circumcised, and joined the house of Israel, remaining so to this day" (14:10). Here are all the essential elements of conversion to Judaism: belief in God, circumcision, and joining the house of Israel. I shall discuss each of these elements separately.

Belief in God (and denial of other gods). In the Bible various foreigners, impressed by the might of the God of Israel, bless God or otherwise acknowledge his suzerainty. Even generals and kings of foreign nations revere the Lord (Exod. 18:11; Dan. 2:47; 3:28–4:3 [3:28–33 MT]; 4:34), but these are not cases of conversion. None of these gentiles "joins the house of Israel." None swears exclusive loyalty to the God of Israel. "Conversion" means a "turning around," a spiritual reorientation, a denial of the past and a pledge for the future. The convert to Judaism denies his foreign gods and accepts the God of Israel as the only true God (and according to the rabbis, acknowledges the truth and binding authority of the Torah). None of the biblical figures (except, perhaps, for Naaman in 2 Kgs. 5) promises exclusive loyalty to God; rather, they polytheistically add the God of Israel to their list of gods. This is not conversion.

Circumcision and baptism. The central ritual for conversion was circumcision. This practice, quite common in the ancient near East (Jer. 9:24–25), figures prominently in only a few sections of the Bible, notably Genesis 17 (the institution of circumcision, including the requirement that all acquired

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5.5.2, in Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 2:26, no. 281. Philo on Deut. 7:3–4: *On the Special Laws* 3.5 §29.

slaves must be circumcised), Genesis 34 (the rape of Dinah and the massacre of Shechem), Exodus 4:24–26 (the incident of Moses, Zipporah, and the angel), and Exodus 12:43–49 and Joshua 5:2–11 (the celebration of the Passover sacrifice). The books of Samuel regularly refer to the Philistines as "having a foreskin" (usually translated "uncircumcised"). All of these passages assign some unusual importance to circumcision, but the Bible as a whole generally ignores it and nowhere regards it as the essential mark of Israelite identity or as the sine qua non for membership in the Israelite polity. It attained this status only in Maccabean times. Some of the extreme hellenizers of the Maccabean period, in their zeal to remove Jewish distinctiveness, tried to hide their circumcision (1 Macc. 1:15). (Other Jews tried to do the same in the time of the Bar Kokhba war.) For the Maccabees, circumcision was such an essential component of Jewish identity that upon conquering various sections of the Holy Land they incorporated the inhabitants into the Jewish polity, a step that meant first and foremost circumcision. The Greek version of the book of Esther, completed about 114 BCE by a resident of Jerusalem, understands the phrase "many of the peoples of the country professed to be Jews" (Esth. 8:17) to mean that the gentiles "were circumcised" (Add. Esth. 8:17). By the end of the first century BCE, circumcision was widely known to the Greeks and Romans as a typically (though not exclusively) Jewish practice. For Paul, circumcision represents subjugation to the demands of the Torah (Gal. 3–5).

Did any other rituals signal the entry of a gentile into the people of Israel? According to rabbinic law, transmitted in the name of authorities who lived in the second century CE, a convert must also be immersed in water (in Christian terminology, be baptized) and must offer a sacrifice at the temple. Yet the same rabbinic authorities insist that the convert's inability to bring a sacrifice after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE does not impair the acquired Jewishness. The convert merely incurs an obligation that will need to be satisfied in the messianic future. According to rabbinic law, then, in the Second Temple period the ritual requirements for conversion were three: circumcision, immersion, and sacrifice. The first of these applied only to men; the latter two applied to both men and women.[19]

The major problem raised by this rabbinic tradition is that no text from the Second Temple period knows of immersion and sacrifice as rituals of conversion. The baptism that figures so prominently in certain portions of the New Testament obviously bears some relationship to the immersion for converts, but the precise nature of that relationship has been endlessly debated

19. *B. Keritot* 9a; see full discussion of this and related texts in my *The Beginnings of Jewishness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

by scholars. The fact that gentile converts to Christianity were baptized is the strongest argument for the view that gentile converts to Judaism must have been baptized already in the first century. A Greek writer living about the year 100 CE also is aware that converts to Judaism are baptized (or does the writer have Christian Jews in mind?).[20] All in all, it seems most likely that baptism/immersion was part of the conversion process in at least some Jewish circles in Judea by the first century of our era. It remains unclear whether the baptism was initiatory, purificatory, or some combination of the two.

Not all Jews of the first century recognized baptism/immersion as a ritual of conversion, and we have no evidence that any Jew of the first century considered a sacrifice at the temple to be the culmination of the conversion ceremony. If, then, neither baptism/immersion nor sacrifice was generally a part of the conversion process, what ritual served to demarcate the changed status of a female convert? Was there a rite of passage by which a woman born a gentile became a Jew? Apparently not. In preexilic times, when conversion did not exist for either man or woman, a foreign woman was assimilated into the community through marriage with an Israelite husband. Solomon may have sinned by marrying foreign wives, but no one suggested that they should be divorced or that his children were not members of the people of Israel. In fact, Solomon's successor was his son Rehoboam, the offspring of an Ammonite woman (1 Kgs. 14:21). In the first century of our era, Josephus still adheres to the same system: intermarriage is prohibited, but if a Jewish man marries a non-Jewish woman, she joins his house and bears him legitimate children. Marriage with a Jew was the de facto equivalent of conversion for a woman. Nonmarital conversion for a woman, in those communities where baptism/immersion was not yet practiced, meant apparently the simple fact that a woman observed Jewish practices. Rabbinic texts of the second and third centuries are the earliest references to conversion rituals for women.

Joining the house of Israel. The third element in Achior's conversion to Judaism was his acceptance into the community. He "joined the house of Israel, remaining so to this day" (Jdt. 14:10). Acceptance by the Jewish community is essential if conversion is to be something other than a theological abstraction, but the social mechanisms that effected this acceptance in antiquity are obscure. Presumably the convert became a "member" of the local community or synagogue. If the sources tell us nothing about this process, at least they tell us something about the attitudes of native-born Jews toward converts and conversion.

20. Epictetus, in Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1:543, no. 254. See Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, 60–61.

Attitudes toward Converts

In the Second Temple period, there are few traces of either opposition to conversion or disdain for converts. One text from Qumran, perhaps reflecting a priestly perspective, asserts that converts will be barred from the temple to be built in Jerusalem in the messianic future. The opponents of Herod the Great called him "half-Jew" because he was a descendant of the Idumeans, who had joined the Judean state under the Maccabees. Does this sneer prove disdain for all converts and their descendants, or is it merely a statement of opposition to Herod? Probably the latter. The Idumeans saw themselves as Jews and participated (along with the descendants of other converts) in the great war against the Romans. Philo has generous praise for converts because they abandon their former people and way of life to join a new people and follow a new way. Many Jews regarded converts so highly that they actively propagated Judaism among gentiles as a way to increase the number of the faithful, a phenomenon I shall discuss below.[21]

Rabbinic texts are full of sentiments in favor of converts. The convert is equal to the native-born Jew "in all respects," the rabbis say. Many homilies begin with phrases like "Beloved are converts in the eyes of God." However, other rabbinic texts assert that converts can never be fully equal to native-born Jews because, like Ralph Rackstraw of *H. M. S. Pinafore*, they lack birth. Gentiles can convert to Judaism by accepting the God and Torah of the Jews, but they can never become fully grafted onto the stock of "Israel" because of their foreign extraction. One Mishnah declares that converts in their prayers ought not to say, "Our God and God of *our* fathers," because the Jews' God was not the god of *their* fathers—after all, their fathers were gentiles! Converts ought instead to say, "Our God and God of *their* fathers," referring to the native Jews in the congregation. This invidious law was ultimately rejected, but it reflects a deeply held view about converts.[22] Some rabbis were not comfortable with the entire idea of conversion, pointing to cases of recidivism or irreligiosity. In the Middle Ages, this negative attitude came to prevail. In ancient times, however, the rabbinic views were much more balanced, with the positive comments outnumbering the negative. A gentile who fully and faithfully converted to Judaism encountered only minimal disabilities in rabbinic law and society.

21. Text from Qumran: *4QFlorilegium*. Herod the half-Jew: Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 14.15.2 §403 ("half-Judean" is probably a better translation). Praise of converts: Philo, *On the Virtues* 20 §§102–3.

22. *M.* (Mishnah) *Bikkurim* 1:4; full discussion in Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, chap. 10.

God-Fearers

Conversion to Judaism entails three elements: belief in the one God (and denial of the pagan gods), circumcision (for men, and immersion/baptism for both men and women), and integration into the Jewish community. Many gentiles, both men and women, converted to Judaism during the last centuries BCE and the first two centuries CE. Even more numerous, however, were those gentiles who accepted certain aspects of Judaism but did not convert to it. In polytheistic fashion, they added the God of Israel to their pantheon and did not deny the pagan gods. Throughout the Roman Empire, various practices of Judaism found favor with large segments of the populace. In the city of Rome, many gentiles observed the Sabbath, the fasts, and the food laws; in Asia Minor, many gentiles attended synagogue on the Sabbath.[23] Although these gentiles observed any number of Jewish practices and in one form or another venerated the God of the Jews, they did not see themselves as Jews and were not seen by others as Jews. Other gentiles became God-fearers not so much through religious observances but through social connections; they befriended Jews or supported the local Jewish community in its activities.

In any case, one Jewish practice studiously avoided by all these God-fearers was circumcision. They resemble the polytheists of the preexilic period who feared the Lord but who never changed their identity. In preexilic times, conversion was not yet an option; in late Second Temple times, it was an option, but these gentiles did not wish to exercise it. The book of Acts calls these people "those who fear" (*phoboumenoi*) or "those who venerate" (*sebomenoi*) the Lord (Acts 13:16, 26; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7). Modern scholars call them "sympathizers" or "semiproselytes," but these terms lack ancient attestation.

Those who see Judaism and Hellenism as discrete entities are perplexed by the phenomenon of the God-fearers. Some have even questioned their existence. After all, how can gentiles become a "little bit Jewish"? And why would they want to? The explanation is to be sought in the other conception of Hellenism discussed above. Many Greeks and Romans adopted the gods (e.g., Isis, Cybele, Mithras, Jupiter Dolichenus) and practices of various "barbarian" nations without converting or losing their identity. Similarly, thinking that the God of the Jews was like the god of other nations, they added him to their pantheon. They observed the Sabbath much as they would the sacred days of other peoples. They frequented the synagogues of the Jews much as they would the temples or ceremonies of other foreign gods. They befriended Jews much as they would other ethnic groups. The many and diverse motives

23. The classic passages are Philo, *Life of Moses* 2.4 §§17–24; and Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.22 §§162–67 and 2.39 §§281–86.

for this behavior need not be investigated here; this is the domain of the historians of the Roman Empire.

Rather than look upon God-fearers as gentiles interested in Judaism, perhaps we should see in the phenomenon the contribution of Judaism to the Hellenistic cultural mix. Greco-Roman culture provides various analogies to Jewish ideas and practices (e.g., many philosophers rejected polytheism and the cult of images; Stoic ethics closely resemble various streams of Jewish ethics; in the first centuries of our era, burial replaced cremation as the most common means of disposing of the dead), but none of these is the product of Jewish influence. But through the God-fearers, Judaism had a clear and distinctive impact on its environment. Observance of the Sabbath and holidays, attendance at synagogue, and the veneration of God were parts of Hellenistic culture.

The phenomenon of God-fearers implies another important point as well. Ancient Judaism was visible and open to outsiders. Gentiles were able to enter synagogues and witness the Jewish observances. Josephus insists that Judaism has no mysteries, no secrets that it keeps hidden from curious observers. This claim may not be entirely true (note, e.g., how secretive Jesus is, according to the Gospel of Mark), but it is essentially correct. Some Jews even engaged in missionary work. The Pharisees travel about the land and the sea in order to make even one *proselyte* (the Greek word for convert to Judaism; Matt. 23:15). Josephus narrates that in the middle of the first century CE, the royal house of the kingdom of Adiabene became Jewish under the tutelage of itinerant Jewish merchants. Several writers from the city of Rome refer to the eagerness of Jews to win gentiles to their side, if not for religious conversion, then at least for political and social support. There is no evidence for an organized Jewish mission to the gentiles, but individuals seem to have engaged in this activity on their own.[24]

Some scholars have suggested that much of the Jewish literature written in Greek had as its goal the propagation of Judaism among the gentiles: the literature often emphasizes elements of Judaism that would make it attractive to outsiders. Of course, the elements that would make Judaism attractive to outsiders are precisely those that would also strengthen its hold on insiders, and it is impossible to tell whether the literature was written to attract gentiles to Judaism or to encourage Greek-speaking Jews to stay within the fold. In any case, during the first century CE at least some Jews were trying to attract converts and God-fearers.

24. No secrets: Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.8 §107. Adiabene: Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20.2.1–5 §§17–53 and 20.4.1–3 §§75–96. Roman writers: Horace, *Satires* 1.4.139–43, in Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1:323, no. 127.

Even after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, the decimation of Alexandrian Jewry in 115–117, and the Bar Kokhba disaster of 132–135, Judaism remained attractive to outsiders. Gentiles were still eager to buy the spiritual wares of the Jews. Perhaps because of the growth of Christianity, Greek philosophers began to treat Judaism seriously as a philosophical system, and some of them liked what they found. "What is Plato if not Moses speaking Attic Greek?" was the remarkable observation of one Neoplatonist.[25] Judaism contributed its God and its angels to the religious syncretism of the second to fifth centuries. But Greeks were not the only God-fearers during these centuries. Many Christians, generally called "Judaizers" by modern scholarship, were drawn to Jewish practices. For some of these Christians, Judaism was attractive *because* of Christianity. Through Christianity they learned the Hebrew Scriptures and became familiar with Jewish observances. Many Christian groups, for example, insisted that Easter must coincide with the Jewish Passover and that it be celebrated with rites similar to those of the Jewish Passover. Other Christians, however, were really pagan God-fearers in disguise. In Antioch in the late fourth century, John Chrysostom was shocked that many Christians were doing what pagan God-fearers had been doing in other parts of the empire three centuries previously: they were attending synagogues and observing the Jewish festivals.[26]

In addition to these God-fearers of various sorts, converts likewise testify to the fact that Judaism's power of attraction had not dimmed. Rabbinic literature mentions a dozen or so converts in Judea and many more than that in Babylonia. Christian and pagan writers mention several others; epitaphs and inscriptions mention yet more. Hadrian's edict against circumcision, one of the causes (or consequences) of the Bar Kokhba war, was rescinded by the following emperor, but only for native Jews. It was now a violation of law for a gentile to be circumcised. At the end of the second century, the Roman emperor outlawed conversion altogether, a prohibition that would be repeated by the Christian emperors of the fourth century (and later). This legislative activity implies that conversions were continuing. Perhaps fewer gentiles than before were converting to Judaism or becoming God-fearers, but Judaism clearly had not lost its allure.

What did change after 70 CE was that Jews, or at least the rabbis, were no longer as eager to sell their spiritual wares to the gentiles. The motives of the mission to the gentiles are obscure, but whatever they may have

25. Numenius, in Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 2:209–11, no. 363.

26. John Chrysostom, *Discourses against Judaizing Christians*, translated by Paul W. Harkins. The Fathers of the Church ; v. 68 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1979)

been—whether to hasten the messianic deliverance, to save souls, to garner political support—the rabbis were not interested. They were not active messianists. In their eyes, the souls of gentiles did not need to be saved, because all righteous gentiles who observe certain basic norms of (what we would call) religion and ethics were guaranteed a share in the world to come (see chap. 7). Perhaps (and this is the common explanation) the rabbis saw the growing power of Christianity and decided not to try to compete with it. Outside of rabbinic circles, perhaps some Jews still actively tried to interest gentiles, especially Christians, in Judaism, but the evidence for such activity is minimal.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the Second Temple and rabbinic periods, the Jews stood in an uneasy relationship with their environment. They learned early on to live under the political dominion of gentile powers and to find a theological justification for this fact, but they always dreamed of their own kingdom. Several times in antiquity, the Jews tried to make their dream into reality, but only once with any degree of success. The Maccabees successfully turned a war for religious freedom into a war for political independence, but their rule was of limited duration and mixed success. In the cultural sphere, the challenge was much clearer. By its very nature, Hellenistic culture was a melting pot of ideas and peoples, and some Jews wished to obliterate all the distinctions between themselves and the gentiles among whom they lived. Most Jews, however, tried to find a way to combine the ideas, beliefs, and values of the dominant culture with their own. It was never easy to define the line that separates the illicit influence that threatens to dilute and destroy Judaism from the licit influence that enriches Judaism and makes it modern. This was the subject of ongoing debate. In the social sphere, the Jews kept themselves apart, prohibiting all marriages with outsiders but allowing gentiles to convert to Judaism. Mirroring this ambiguity was the response of the gentile world. Many gentiles befriended Jews, or became God-fearers, or even converted to Judaism, but others, because of political tensions between the Jews and other elements in their communities, expressed a pointed anti-Judaism.

The challenges mounted by the gentile world in the political, cultural, and social spheres were distinct enough to permit varied responses to each. A Jew might, say, be quite accommodating in the political sphere, wholeheartedly supporting the ruling power but quite unyielding in the cultural or social sphere. Ezra, for example, enjoyed the protection of the Persian king and supported the Persian Empire in return but opposed intermarriage. The Maccabees, by contrast, rebelled against the Seleucid Empire but did

not divorce themselves from Hellenistic culture. Some Jews, the extremists, were consistent. The extreme hellenizers who supported Epiphanes wanted to merge Judaism more fully into the Hellenistic world in all three spheres. The revolutionaries of 66–70 CE had as their goals the creation of an independent state, the purification of the land of Israel from all foreign contagion, and the separation of Israel from the gentiles. Most Jews, however, were not so consistent. Their goal was not consistency but the perpetuation of Judaism.

3

The Jewish "Religion"

Practices and Beliefs

In the eyes of the ancients, the essence of religion was neither faith nor dogma, but action. Humanity was commanded by the gods to perform certain acts and to refrain from certain acts, and these commandments and prohibitions (esp. the prohibitions) constituted the essence of *religio*. When Greek conquerors wished to benefit their subjects, they guaranteed them the right to observe "the ancestral laws" or "the ancestral constitution"; they had no need to mention "the ancestral beliefs" or "the ancestral faith." These facts do not mean that the ancients had no deeply felt beliefs about the gods, but the polytheism of antiquity produced few literary works that delineate either its dogmas or its theology. In antiquity a contemplative person who sought systematic answers to questions about the nature of the gods and their involvement in human affairs would have studied philosophy, not "religion." Many philosophers maintained radical notions about the gods. In the fifth century BCE, some Sophists argued that the gods did not really exist but were invented by humans to promote fear in the masses and thereby maintain social order. This position gained currency among segments of the aristocracy in Hellenistic and Roman times, but the adherents of such views generally were not persecuted or harassed as long as they did not violate religious taboos and as long as they participated in the religious rituals of the state. Radical belief (or disbelief) did not make them heretics.

These generalizations must be stated at the outset because the pervasive influence of Christianity on our thinking makes us equate "religion" with theology or faith. This equation is perhaps true for Christianity, but is false not only for ancient polytheism but also for the Judaism of antiquity. Both Jews and gentiles recognized that the Jews denied the gods of the nations and claimed that their God alone was the true God, the Lord of the universe. Yet

for both Jews and gentiles, the boundary line between Judaism and polytheism was determined more by Jewish observances than by Jewish theology. Josephus defines an apostate as a Jew who "hates the customs of the Jews" or "does not abide by the ancestral customs." He defines a convert to Judaism as a gentile who, through circumcision, "adopts the ancestral customs of the Jews." These definitions omit the theological tenets of Judaism. When describing conversion to Judaism, Philo at least mentions the fact that the proselyte denies the gods of the gentiles and believes in the one true God, but that is all. For Philo too, the essence of conversion is the adoption of the way of life of the Jews. In the first instance, the ancient word "Judaism" designates the sum of all those practices and manners that make Jews distinctive, if not downright peculiar. A gentile who "Judaizes" adopts the distinctive ways and manners of the Jews, not necessarily their theology or philosophy.[1]

Practices, not theology, also determined the boundary lines within the Jewish community. The debates between sectarians and the nascent Christian "orthodoxy" of antiquity centered on theological matters (notably the nature and function of the second person of the Trinity), but for the most part the debates among Jewish sects centered on matters of law (see chap. 5). The Jews of Qumran criticized not the theology of their coreligionists but their way of life, especially their calendar, their purity rules, and their administration of the temple. Many works of the Second Temple period are devoted to theological or philosophical themes, but none of these works is creedal or dogmatic in character. The library of books assembled by the Jews of Qumran contains a bewildering variety of theological ideas and eschatological scenarios. Sometimes a single text juxtaposes several different eschatological or messianic theories. Not a single tractate of either the Mishnah or the Talmud is devoted to a "theological" topic. The rabbis have many things to say about God, sin, atonement, the creation of the world, the election of Israel, the covenant, the messiah, the reward of the righteous, the punishment of the wicked, and the resurrection of the dead. Yet their theological speculations on these topics are presented only in scattered utterances and do not receive the detailed and sustained analysis that characterizes the rabbinic discussions of legal matters.

Christianity and Islam are creedal religions. The Council of Nicaea (325 CE) defined Christian faith thus: "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son

1. Josephus, *Jewish War* 7.3.3 §50 and *Jewish Antiquities* 20.5.2 §100 (apostasy); 20.2.1 §17 and 20.2.4 §41 (conversion); Philo, *On the Virtues* §§102–8 (in vol. 8 of the Loeb edition). On "Judaism" and "Judaizing" see the full discussion in Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*.

of God, begotten of the Father, . . . God from God, Light from Light, . . . and in the Holy Spirit."[2] From its inception Islam has expressed its central tenet with the phrase "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet." Each of these statements is a *creed*, a fixed formula that summarizes a religion's essential articles of belief (its *dogmas*) and is sanctioned by ecclesiastical authority. Creeds serve as an admission test for converts and as a statement of loyalty for the faithful. In the Middle Ages, in response to the challenge presented by Christianity and Islam, Maimonides (1138–1204) formulated a creed for Judaism as well. Those Jews who subscribed to his thirteen principles of belief were, Maimonides said, loyal Jews; those who rejected any one of them were sinners and heretics, hardly deserving the name Jew at all.[3] Defining Judaism this way is completely foreign to antiquity. Ancient Judaism had no creeds. The Jews of antiquity devoted much energy to theological speculation and achieved almost unanimous agreement on certain theological principles, as we shall see, but the boundaries of Jewish communities were not defined by beliefs.

PRACTICES

The practices of Judaism are too numerous and varied to be surveyed here. In this section I concentrate on five areas: the worship of God (through sacrifice, prayer, and the study of Scripture), the ritual observances, ritual and ethics, "legalism" and the "yoke of the law," and women's Judaism.

The Worship of God

In both the First and the Second Temples, God was worshiped through sacrifices, that is, the slaughter, roasting, and eating of animals. Offerings of grain, fruit, bread, and incense played only an ancillary role. The most important sacrifice was the *Tamid* ("continual offering" or "perpetual offering") that was burned on the altar every morning and afternoon (Num. 28:1–8). The Tamid was God's daily "food" (Num. 28:2), and the priests did their utmost, even at times of great danger, not to let the offerings lapse. The profanation of the temple by Epiphanes and the destruction of the temple by Titus caused

2. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (New York: Longman, 1972; repr., 1983), 215–16.

3. Menachem Marc Kellner, *Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); idem, *Must a Jew Believe Anything?* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1999).

the cessation of the Tamid—a tragic event.[4] The Tamid, like the special sacrifices offered on the Sabbath and the festivals, was purchased with public moneys and was burned on the altar in the name of the entire nation. Other types of sacrifices—notably the "whole-burnt offering" (sometimes known by its Greek designation, "holocaust"), the "peace offering," and the "sin offering"—were purchased and brought to the temple by individuals, either to seek atonement or to express gratitude to God. (The Passover offering was of a different sort altogether: it was a family or group feast celebrated around the central shrine.) Since only the priests were allowed to enter the inner precincts of the temple and approach the altar, they alone did some of the slaughtering, some of the eating, all of the roasting, and all of the blood manipulation. They ministered before the Lord on behalf of the people.

The regulations governing the sacrificial cult[5] are set forth in great detail in Leviticus, Numbers, and the last chapters of the book of Ezekiel. Nowhere, however, does the Hebrew Bible prescribe or regulate the worship of God through prayer. In the technical sense, "prayer" means a request or petition presented to a deity, but I use the term here to include any speech addressed to God or intended to establish communion between God and humans. (Thus prayer includes words of praise and thanksgiving and, as we shall see, the study of Scripture.) The rabbinic term is "the service of God in the heart."[6] Both prayer and sacrifice were spiritual experiences, but the former consisted of speech and the latter involved slaughter of animals. The contrast between them goes further. Sacrifices can be offered only at the temple in Jerusalem (Deut. 12), only by the priests, only at set times, and only in certain ways. Prayer can be offered anywhere by anyone, at any time and in any way. The contrast between sacrifice and prayer is the contrast between elitism and populism and between fixed form and free form. But these contrasts did not prevent the two modes of worship from blending together. The process was twofold: prayer gradually entered the temple cult, and the fixity and regularity that characterized the sacrificial system gradually came to characterize prayer as well. I shall briefly survey this twofold process and then summarize the

4. Dan. 11:31; Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.2.1 §§94–102.

5. "Cult" means "system of worship," what people do in order to cultivate a Deity and win his/her favor. The "Temple cult" is the sum total of what the priests and worshipers do there in order to attain and maintain God's favor. How and why this perfectly innocent and useful word became a pejorative designation for "a small religious group, whose policies and way of life are seen as sinister and threatening by society at large," I do not know.

6. *Sifre Deuteronomy* §41, in Louis Finkelstein, *Sifre on Deuteronomy* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1969), 87–88.

constitutive elements of communal prayer in the last century of the Second Temple period.[7]

Prayer at the Temple

The Hebrew Bible is filled with prayers to God. In times of distress and happiness, Israelite heroes, prophets, kings, and occasionally the entire people turned to God in prayer. These prayers are both public and private, prose and poetry, original and traditional, spontaneous and highly studied—but they are not obligatory rituals (they are not "statutory"). Sometimes, especially in cases of emergency, the Israelites would pray at the temple, but these prayers were not part of the temple cult. King Solomon prayed that the temple might serve as a house of prayer for both Israelites and foreigners, but all the prayers that Solomon mentions are spontaneous expressions of need or joy (1 Kgs. 8). The best evidence that the temple was the locus of prayer during both the First and the Second Temple periods is the book of Psalms. Virtually all the biblical psalms, even those that lament personal or national catastrophes or that hail a king at his coronation, are hymns of praise to God. They range in date from the period of the monarchy, if not earlier (some of them are Israelite versions of Canaanite or Egyptian hymns), to that of the Maccabees. But the fact that they were written down and assembled as a collection implies—most scholars agree—that they were meant to be recited liturgically, and it is most likely that the recitation took place at the temple. Having come to the temple, with or without a sacrifice, the worshiper would recite either a psalm of joy and thanksgiving or a psalm of woe and lament, whichever was appropriate for the situation.

The canonical Psalter represents only a portion of the hymns that were composed and recited during the Second Temple period. The "Psalms scroll" from Qumran contains excerpts from our book of Psalms, rearranged for liturgical use, as well as several hymns that were not incorporated in our book of Psalms. Another Qumran scroll is a collection of sectarian hymns (*Hodayot*) that resemble the canonical psalms in phraseology and form, even if they differ from them in content. The pseudepigraphic work *The Psalms of Solomon* is yet another collection of poems heavily indebted to the canonical Psalms. These texts show that the psalmic tradition was still alive in late Second Temple times. Further, numerous works of the period—for example, the Qumran *Manual of Discipline*, 1 Maccabees, *1 Enoch*, Judith, Tobit—contain hymns and prayers that may well reflect some of the real prayers used by the

7. I develop some of these ideas in my "The Temple and the Synagogue," in *Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. William Horbury, W. D. Davies, and John Sturdy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3:298–325.

community in daily life. All these texts imply that the recitation of prayers was a prominent feature of Jewish piety, not just for sectarians like the Jews of Qumran, but also for plain folks. Jews who lived in or near Jerusalem prayed regularly at the temple. This is the plausible claim of Luke 1:10, "Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside [the temple]," and Acts 3:1, "One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon."

None of these texts implies that prayer was part of the temple cult; lay Jews prayed *at* and *toward* the temple, but the temple liturgy consisted of sacrifices, not prayer. Neither Leviticus nor Numbers nor Deuteronomy nor Ezekiel mentions prayer as an integral part of the sacrificial cult. The atonement sacrifice for both the individual (Lev. 5:5; Num. 5:7) and the community (Lev. 16:21) was accompanied by a confession, and the presentation of the firstfruits at the sanctuary was accompanied by the recitation of a summary of Israel's sacred history (Deut. 26:1–11), but these are the only exceptions. The act of sacrifice was silent; neither the priest nor the worshiper was required to say anything. The cult of the Second Temple too was silent. A writer of the second century BCE admires the remarkable silence that prevailed in the temple as the priests scurried about, performing their sacred tasks.[8] The Chronicler claims that the song of the Levites was organized in the time of King David (1 Chr. 25), but no matter when it was instituted, the song of the Levites always was background music. The central element of the cult was the sacred ballet of the priests, not the musical accompaniment of the Levites.

Some counterevidence, however, suggests that the prayers and hymns were a regular part of the temple liturgy during the last centuries of its existence. According to the Qumran Psalms scroll, King David composed 364 hymns to accompany the daily Tamid (Num. 28:1–8) and 52 hymns to accompany the weekly Sabbath sacrifice. The author of this text imagines, then, direct correspondence between sacrifice and prayer. Josephus, too, speaks of prayers being offered alongside the sacrifices.[9] According to the Mishnah, prayer was a statutory part of the daily Tamid sacrifice in two ways. First, the priests, immediately after bringing the sacrifice and before offering the incense, would pray on behalf of the nation and then recite the Shema (Deut. 6:4–9) and the priestly benediction (Num. 6:24–26). I shall return to this below. Second, the Mishnah claims that "the prophets of old" divided the laity into twenty-four divisions (called "stations," *maʿamadot*) to parallel the twenty-four divisions (called "watches," *mishmarot*) of the priesthood. Each week a different division of priests officiated in the temple, and each week a different division of

8. *Letter of Aristeas*, 92–95.
9. Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.23 §§196–97.

Israelites gathered in the temple and in the villages to recite scriptural verses (and apparently, prayers) while the priests were offering the Tamid. The point of this practice was to make explicit the connection between the people, as represented by their lay delegates, and the sacrifices offered on their behalf by their priestly representatives.[10] The historicity of these two claims is hard to assess. While there is much other evidence confirming the importance of the Shema in Second Temple Judaism, no prerabbinic evidence confirms the existence of the lay divisions paralleling those of the priests. Still, I think it plausible that, at some point in the Maccabean or Herodian period, prayer became a part of the daily temple liturgy. The temple did indeed become a "house of prayer" (Isa. 56:7).

Fixed Texts, Times, and Places for Prayer

Perhaps visitors to Jerusalem and the inhabitants of the holy city prayed at the temple, but for other Jews, whether of the land of Israel or of the Diaspora, this was not practical. Perhaps on occasion they would go on pilgrimage to the temple to pray and sacrifice, but these occasions must have been few and far between, especially for Diaspora Jews. Since they were prohibited by Deuteronomy from building temples and offering sacrifices in their own localities, how were they to worship God? Prayer was the obvious answer. Unlike sacrifice, prayers could be offered to God anywhere. Individuals could pray in their houses. Daniel 6:10 (11) narrates that its hero, then living in Babylon, "continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him." The community could pray in the town square, on street corners (Matt. 6:5), or in any place of assembly. By the third century BCE, Diaspora Jews began to build special *proseuchai*, which literally means "prayers" but probably should be translated "prayerhouses." Instead of prayerhouses, the Jews of the land of Israel had *synagōgai*, which literally means "gatherings" but probably should be translated "meetinghouses." Whether the Jews of the land of Israel prayed regularly in their meetinghouses, which are not attested before the first century BCE, is not entirely clear. Although prayers figure prominently in the literature of the Second Temple period, few texts mention synagogues or locate prayer within them (cf. Matt. 6:5). I shall return to this question in my discussion of the history of the synagogue (chap. 4).

Both in and out of the temple and the synagogue, the Jews prayed to God. Prayer was accessible to all and a much more personal experience than sacrifice. In the tradition of the prophets who declared that God wants goodness

10. *M. Tamid* 5:1; *Taʿanit* 4:1–4.

instead of (or in addition to) the sacrifices, five passages in the Psalms state that prayer is superior (40:6–9 [7–10]; 51:17 [19]; 69:30–31 [31–32]) or equal (119:108; 141:2) to the sacrificial cult. The same theme is echoed in various works of the Second Temple period. The Psalms passages (whose precise dating is uncertain, although all seem to be of the Hellenistic period) are not polemics against the sacrificial cult but pleas to God to recognize the validity of worship that does not include sacrifices. The temple was the site of God's name, the holiest place on earth, and the center of Israelite religion, but its cult was exclusively sacrificial. Pilgrims were instructed not to appear there "empty-handed" (Deut. 16:16–17). Those who did appear there with empty hands, for whatever reason, apologized to God by asserting that prayer and contrition are the real sacrifices that God desires. The Psalms passages show that prayer, even prayer at the temple, was easily understood to be an equivalent or a substitute for the sacrifices. Sectarian circles, like Qumran and certain segments of Christianity, had a much more hostile stance toward the temple and its rituals, as I shall discuss later (chap. 5).

Perhaps because prayer was seen as a counterpart or equivalent to sacrifice, it gradually absorbed some of the fixity and regularity that characterized the sacrificial cult. The background to this process is the dilemma encountered in many religions: how to stimulate piety and encourage creativity while maintaining order and preventing chaos. Communal prayer requires order and direction, but the close regulation of the texts and times of prayer might stifle the spontaneity that is required if prayer is to be a spiritual experience. Christian monasticism of the fourth and fifth centuries was divided on this issue. Egyptian monasticism reduced the public liturgy to its barest essentials in order to allow the monks to implement Paul's injunction to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17; cf. Ps. 34:1 [2]), while Syrian monasticism developed the public liturgy at great length.[11] Jesus taught that short prayer in private was better than long prayer in public (Matt. 6:5–8).

The rabbis keenly felt the same dilemma. Their conclusion was a compromise between their desire for order and their desire for spontaneity. They declared that every Jew must pray twice daily (morning and afternoon), since prayer corresponded to the Tamid sacrifices (Num. 28:1–8) and was no less obligatory than the Tamid itself. These prayers could be recited privately, but the rabbis felt that they would be more acceptable to God if they were recited in a communal setting. (A third prayer, to be recited in the evening yet not corresponding to any sacrifice, was recommended but not required.) The regularity of the sacrificial system was transferred to prayer. The rabbis

11. Derwas Chitty, *The Desert a City* (repr., Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1966), 72, citing John Cassian, *Institutes* 3.1–3.

also determined the content of the central prayers, fixing their themes and structure. However, to encourage individual creativity, the rabbis allowed the worshiper (or prayer leader) to choose the precise language by which to express these themes. As long as certain crucial phrases and formulas were incorporated, the rabbis were content. It was not until the early Middle Ages that the rabbis standardized the language of virtually all the prayers. (The Christian eucharistic prayers underwent a similar development. In the second century, these prayers had set themes and formulas, but a fixed text did not begin to emerge until the third century.)[12] Although the rabbis did not say so, the regulation of the content and structure of the prayers was another step in assimilating prayer to sacrifice. Worship of God had to have a fixed form. Some rabbis were upset and warned that the overregulation of the liturgy would render the prayers perfunctory and devoid of meaning, just as centuries earlier the prophets had criticized the sacrificial cult, but they were the clear minority.[13]

Do these rabbinic developments reflect the ideas of the Second Temple period? Ezra made sure that his penitential prayer coincided with the time for the afternoon incense (or Tamid; Ezra 9:4–5), and the same practice is attested in texts of the Maccabean period (Jdt. 9:1; cf. Dan. 9:21) and the first century CE (Luke 1:10 and Acts 3:1, cited above). The offering of the Tamid was a time for prayer. Some pious individuals added an evening prayer (Dan. 6:10 [11]; cf. Ps. 55:17 [18]) to the two that parallel the Tamid. The coordination of prayer with sacrifices reflects the idea that the times ordained by God for sacrifices were propitious for prayer as well. But none of these texts implies that prayer was as obligatory as the sacrifices or that it had to be offered at fixed times. The editors who canonized the book of Psalms and the various authors of the numerous prayers of the Second Temple period were developing liturgical genres, themes, and formulas, but they did not promote the rabbinic idea that every Jew is obligated to pray to God twice a day at specific times and that these prayers must follow certain prescribed patterns. In Second Temple times, sacrificial worship had fixed form and fixed content. Prayer, at least in the broad reaches of society, did not.

An important exception to this pattern—indeed, the only known exception—is the piety of the Jews of Qumran.[14] This community developed a fixed

12. The fixed formulas come, of course, from the Gospels' accounts of the Last Supper (Matt. 26:26–29 and parallels). The earliest extant eucharistic prayers are in the *Didache* (perhaps) and *The Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus, but the prayers did not become standardized until much later.

13. *M. Berakhot* 4:4; *Avot* 2:13.

14. In this paragraph I am much indebted to Bilhah Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer and Religious Poetry* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994).

liturgy more than any other Jews of the Second Temple period. Specific days (e.g., "the Day of Atonement," "the Sabbath day," "the day of the first fruits") had fixed prayers. The order of *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* contains songs of praise for thirteen different Sabbaths, each of them numbered and dated (e.g., "The first Sabbath on the fourth of the first month," "the sixth Sabbath on the ninth of the second month," "the twelfth Sabbath on the twenty-fourth of the third month"). In addition, the community and/or its leaders were to praise God at fixed times every day (e.g., "at the beginning of the dominion of light, . . . at the beginning of the watches of darkness"), reciting hymns and blessings that were unique to the sect. Implicit here, as many scholars have recognized, is the idea that the sacrifices of the temple have been replaced by prayer. The Jews of Qumran separated themselves completely from the temple of Jerusalem, regarding its priests as wicked and its liturgy as illegitimate. At the end of days, they believed, a new temple would be built in Jerusalem, administered by righteous priests in accordance with the proper procedures. But in the interim, the sect itself replaced the temple; it was a "holy community," a virtual temple whose liturgy was not animal sacrifice—animal sacrifice outside of Jerusalem being prohibited by Deuteronomy—but prayer. According to the order of *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, in the supernal temple the angels offer sacrifices of prayer and praise, and on earth below the sectarians do the same. For the Jews of Qumran, the analogy of prayer to sacrifice was the result of their studied rejection of the Jerusalem temple and its sacrificial cult; for the rabbis after 70 CE, the analogy of prayer to sacrifice was the result of the destruction of the temple. For each group, the absence of the temple—in one case, an ideological absence caused by rejection; in the other case, a real absence caused by the temple's destruction—allowed prayer to attain a fixity and an importance that it otherwise did not attain.

The Elements of Communal Prayer

The Qumran prayers are sectarian: they were composed, preserved, and recited by members of the Qumran group and no one else. Many of them exhibit the "us-them" contrast so characteristic of a sect's view of the world. In contrast, the rabbinic statutory prayers have no sectarian features; their "we" is not the "we" of a separatist group but of the entire community of Israel. These rabbinic prayers derive from two sources: the daily prayers that, according to the Mishnah as cited above, were offered by the temple priests after slaughtering the Tamid; and the communal prayers of the protorabbinic circles of Judea in the first century CE. The identity and popularity of these circles are the subjects of scholarly debate (see chap. 5). If they were the Pharisees, and if the Pharisees were the spiritual leaders of Second Temple Judaism, their liturgy, together with that of the temple, fairly represents the

communal prayer of the majority of the population. If, however, the sphere of influence of the Pharisees (or whoever constituted the protorabbinic circles) was more limited, their liturgy cannot claim to represent the "norm."

Whether or not they represent the liturgy of the population as a whole, the earliest rabbinic prayers merit attention here because their roots may well reach back into the Second Temple period (this point is much debated). I shall survey the major elements of the statutory liturgy as outlined in the Mishnah: (a) the recitation of the Ten Commandments and the Shema; (b) praise of God; and (c) petitions to God. Finally I shall describe (d) the public study of Scripture.

a. The recitation of the Ten Commandments and the Shema. The centerpiece of the priestly prayer in the temple was the recitation of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:2–17 [2–14] or Deut. 5:6–21 [6–18]) and the Shema. The Shema consists of three paragraphs (Deut. 6:4–9; 11:13–21; Num. 15:37–41) and draws its name from the opening Hebrew word of the first of them: "Hear [*Shema*], O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone." Although neither the Ten Commandments nor the Shema is a "prayer" (each is a series of commands and exhortations from God), they were incorporated into the liturgy because they represent some of the core ideas and commandments of Judaism. The importance of the Ten Commandments and the Shema is confirmed by their inclusion in many of the phylacteries found at Qumran (see below) and by their appearance together on the Nash Papyrus, a lone papyrus written in Egypt in the second century BCE. In fact, one teacher in the first century CE stated that the first two verses of the Shema constitute the "greatest commandment" (Mark 12:29–30). Josephus remarks that Jews recite the Shema twice daily "in order to thank God for his bounteous gifts." In the rabbinic synagogue, the Ten Commandments were removed from the liturgy because heretics argued that only those ten were revealed by God.[15] The Shema, however, remained (and remains) one of the essential parts of the service. I shall return to it below.

b. Praise of God. The most common element in Jewish prayer is praise. In the temple the recitation of the Ten Commandments and the Shema was preceded and followed by benedictions (or blessings, in Hebrew *berakhot*; sing. *berakhah*). Praise of the Deity is universal, but benedictions are a quintessentially Jewish mode of worship that was adopted by Christianity (Luke 1:68; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3). The worshiper proclaims in the second person, *barukh attah Adonai*, "Blessed [or perhaps more accurately, "praised"] are you, O Lord," or in the third person, *barukh adonai*, "Blessed/praised is the Lord." Various figures in the Hebrew Bible, beginning with Jethro (Exod. 18:10), proclaim that the God of Israel is blessed, and two texts written in

15. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 4.7.13 §212; *b. Berakhot* 12a; *y. Berakhot* 1.8 3c.

the early part of the Second Temple period employ the phrase, as the rabbis would later do, in the second person (1 Chr. 29:10; Ps. 119:12). The familiarity of this formula cannot mask its peculiarity, however, for how can humanity bless God or pronounce God blessed? The answer to this question is not clear. In spite of the obscurity of its theological premise, the benediction pattern was popular in the hymns (*Hodayot*) of Qumran and triumphed over all others in the rabbinic prayer book. Although the *berakhah* is a formula of praise, it is used by the rabbis not only to praise God or declare his attributes (e.g., "Blessed are you, O Lord, the holy God") but also to thank God (e.g., "Blessed are you, O Lord, king of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth," a benediction that thanks God for food) and to petition him (e.g., "Blessed are you, O Lord, the redeemer of Israel," which concludes a request for the redemption of Israel). According to the Mishnah, then, the Ten Commandments and the Shema were accompanied by "benedictions." It is most unfortunate that the Mishnah does not present their text. The rabbinic prayer book still uses benedictions to introduce and conclude the Shema.

Praise of God was not restricted to benedictions. The Psalter and the literature of the Second Temple period are filled with psalms and hymns of many types. A special kind of hymn is the *Qedushah* (Sanctification; literally, "Holiness"), the antiphonal recitation of Isaiah 6:3. According to Isaiah, when the angels behold God seated on his heavenly throne, they sing before him, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts." By inserting the *Qedushah* into their own prayers, the Jews tried to imitate the angels, perhaps even to join them. While the earliest direct evidence for the liturgical usage of Isaiah 6:3 stems from the second century CE, the idea that humans pray along with the angels is implicit in the Qumran *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*. This text describes the hymns recited by the angels on various Sabbaths of the year; armed with this knowledge, the members of the group themselves could praise the Lord at the proper times and in the proper fashion by joining their voices to those of the angelic chorus. And yet the *Qedushah* does not appear here. Other Second Temple texts know that the angels recite, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts," but only in rabbinic times, especially in mystical circles, does the *Qedushah* attain a fixed place in the liturgy. Under the Latin title *Sanctus*, it also entered the Christian liturgy.[16]

c. Petitions. The main petitionary prayer of the rabbis of the second century is the *Shemoneh esreh*, literally, "The Eighteen," a series of eighteen petitions, each in the form of a benediction. The first three benedictions form an introduction, the last three a conclusion, and the intervening ones the body of the

16. Second Temple texts: *1 Enoch* 39:12. Second-century texts: *t.* [Tosefta] *Berakhot* 1.9. Mystics: see the Hekhalot literature, including *3 Enoch* in James H. Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 1:223–315.

prayer. Here, for example, are the first three petitions from this central section (I present the text from the standard prayer book):[17]

> You graciously give humanity knowledge and teach mortals understanding. Grant us knowledge, understanding, and insight. Blessed are you, O Lord, gracious giver of knowledge.
>
> Return us, our Father, to your Torah; draw us near, our King, to your worship; cause us to return to you in perfect repentance. Blessed are you, O Lord, who are pleased with repentance.
>
> Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned; pardon us, our King, for we have transgressed; for you are one who pardons and forgives. Blessed are you, O Lord, who are gracious and ever forgiving.

First, humanity prays for knowledge of God; the knowledge of God leads to a cognizance of sin and the desire for repentance; the desire for repentance in turn leads to the plea for forgiveness. These opening petitions for knowledge, repentance, and forgiveness, like all the other petitions of the Eighteen Benedictions, are couched in the first-person plural (the petitioner says "us," not "me") and conclude with the formula "Blessed are you, O Lord."

The history of this prayer is immensely complicated, but its basic contours were established no later than the second century CE, and its nucleus may derive from the latter part of Second Temple times. It bears obvious similarities to the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4). The Hebrew text of Ben Sira incorporates a hymn that seems to be an early version of many of the benedictions.[18] One scholar has argued that the petitions for health, prosperity, and peace, from the central portion of the Eighteen Benedictions, constituted the "civic prayer for Jerusalem," which was offered by the priests in good Hellenistic fashion on behalf of the security and welfare of the capital city.[19] According to the Mishnah, after reciting the Ten Commandments and the Shema, the priests in the temple would pray that the sacrifices should find favor before God. After the destruction of the temple, the petition was changed from a prayer for the acceptability of the sacrifices to a prayer for their restoration, and the petition entered the Eighteen Benedictions. In rabbinic times, the prayer was still in flux. Rabban Gamaliel (about 90 or 100 CE) edited a benediction asking God to frustrate heretics (see chap. 7 and 8). The actual wording of the petitions was not established for centuries. By the time the process was over, the Eighteen Benedictions actually contained nineteen benedictions!

17. *Daily Prayer Book: Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem*, ed. Philip Birnbaum (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1949; often reprinted), 86.

18. Sir. 51:12a, omitted by the Greek and Syriac versions.

19. Elias Bickerman, "The Civic Prayer of Jerusalem," *Harvard Theological Review* 55 (1962): 163–85, reprinted in his *Studies in Jewish and Christian History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), vol. 2.

d. Scriptural study. Priestly prayer in the temple featured the *recitation* of the Ten Commandments and the Shema; communal prayer outside the temple also included the *study* of Scripture, notably the Torah (Genesis–Deuteronomy). This practice is based on the idea that God can be worshiped through the study of his revealed Word.

In the first two paragraphs of the Shema (and elsewhere), God commands the Israelites to study the Law constantly so that they will know how to find favor in his eyes. Study of the Torah is here conceived as a means to an end, since its purpose is to teach which actions are to be avoided and which to be pursued. Gradually, however, Torah study became an end in itself. The author of Psalm 119 can imagine no greater joy than meditating on the words of the Lord. "Oh, how I love your law [*Torah*]! It is my meditation all day long. . . . With open mouth I pant, because I long for your commandments" (Ps. 119:97, 131). Ben Sira (Sir. 38:34–39:1) extols "the one who devotes himself to the study of the law of the Most High!" and "seeks out the wisdom of all the ancients." This is a new type of piety whose origins are not clear. Perhaps it derives from the tradition that enjoins the constant study and pursuit of "Wisdom," here equated with Torah. Perhaps it emerged under Hellenistic influence, reflecting the Socratic view that the soul is ennobled and made virtuous through the acquisition of knowledge. In any case, this idea had a profound influence on the Judaism of the Second Temple and rabbinic periods. Its ultimate expression is the ideal of the sage who meditates on the words of the Lord day and night, even those words that have no practical application. It is the basis of all rabbinic piety.

The idea was implemented in the communal liturgy. Josephus and Philo boast that all Jews are learned in the Law because Moses, unlike other legislators, ordained the regular study of his statutes. According to rabbinic tradition, too, the public reading of a section of the Torah every Sabbath was a custom introduced by Moses. The basis of these claims is the Deuteronomic ordinance that the Torah be read publicly at the central shrine (Deut. 31:10–13), but while Deuteronomy has the Torah read every seven years, by the end of the Second Temple period, sections of the Torah were read publicly in synagogues every week. In rabbinic times, the sequential reading of the Torah was practiced in two different ways. In Babylonia, the Torah was divided into fifty-four sections, and the entire Torah was read through every year. In the land of Israel, the Torah was subdivided into more numerous sections, and the cycle of readings was completed every three or three and a half years. The cycle of readings in first-century Judea (if indeed there was a cycle) is unknown to us.[20]

20. Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.18 §175; Philo, *Life of Moses* 2.39 §216; idem, *On the Creation* 43 §128. Rabbinic tradition: *y. Megillah* 4.1 75a.

At public services, the Torah was not only read; it was also explained and interpreted. The model for this activity was Ezra (Neh. 8:8). The highlight of the Sabbath gatherings of the Therapeutae and the Essenes was (according to Philo) a sermon on the allegorical meaning of the Law. Jesus taught in the synagogues of Galilee; Paul, in the synagogues of Asia Minor. In first-century Jerusalem, one Theodotus erected a synagogue "for the reading of the Law and the teaching of the commandments." For the benefit of those who did not know sufficient Hebrew, the text was translated into the vernacular, Aramaic in Babylonia and parts of the land of Israel, Greek in the Greco-Roman Diaspora and parts of the land of Israel. Several different ancient Greek and Aramaic translations are extant (see chap. 6). In addition to or instead of the translation, synagogue services featured the sermon, the explication of the meaning of the sacred texts. This combination of communal prayer and scriptural study made synagogue services unique in the ancient world.

Ritual Observances

The Torah contains many regulations that govern the daily behavior of the Israelite. An Israelite must put fringes on his clothing, put a railing around the roof of his home, abstain from certain foods, refrain from working on the seventh day of the week, and so on. The purpose of all these rituals was, as the Torah repeatedly says, to make Israel a "holy" people (Exod. 19:6; Lev. 19:2; Deut. 7:6). To better achieve this objective, the Jews of the Second Temple period developed new rituals, broadened the application of many of the laws of the Torah, and in general intensified the life of service to God. Daily prayer and regular Torah study are two of the most important innovations. The injunction of the Shema that the Israelites are to place the words of God upon their heart, hand, forehead, and doorposts (Deut. 6:6–9), clearly a metaphorical demand for constant meditation on God's commandments, was, by the second century BCE, interpreted literally, giving rise to the custom of wearing *tefillin*, phylacteries (Matt. 23:5), and affixing *mezuzot* to the doorposts. Each of these is a specially shaped capsule that contains a copy of the Shema and other excerpts from the Torah, and each is a physical and ritualized expression of the desire to maintain constant awareness of God's presence. Many phylacteries were found at Qumran. The laws governing the Sabbath, diet, and purity were greatly expanded. New prohibitions were added to those provided by the Torah, new rituals were invented, and new meanings were attached to the observance of the rituals and prohibitions. For the polytheists of the Greco-Roman world, the most characteristic practices of Judaism were circumcision, abstention from labor on the Sabbath, and the avoidance of pork. The stringent observance and idiosyncratic interpretation

of the purity laws assumed a particularly important place in the definition of "sectarian" groups (see chap. 5).

The goal of these innovations was threefold: (a) to ensure that every moment of a Jew's life was spent in service to God; (b) to bring the Jew into contact with the sacred; and (c) to democratize religion. The first goal is shared by the piety of the Torah and the piety of the Second Temple period, but the second is a development, and the third is a radical transformation of the legacy of the Torah.

The Holiness Code enjoins the Israelites, "Be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2). In the Torah, there is only one place of holiness: the central shrine, where the divine presence dwells. According to the Torah, God also dwells among the people in the "camp," but this conception is adduced in legal contexts only to justify the prohibition of certain acts lest they pollute the camp and cause God to withdraw his presence (e.g., Num. 5:1–4; Deut. 23:10–15). Prophetic inspiration was supposed to be restricted to the central shrine, not the "camp" (Num. 11:24–29). Like the Israelites of the preexilic period, the Jews of the Second Temple period did not try to determine whether the divine presence was to be found in the temple, among the people of Israel, or indeed, throughout the world. These conceptions were mutually contradictory but simultaneously true (see the second part of this chapter). But one of the hallmarks of Judaism, in contrast to Israelite religion, is the transferal of sanctity from the temple to areas outside of it, from the priests to the laity, and from the temple cult to actions of daily life. Many sectarian groups argued that the purity laws applied outside the temple as well as inside it, and that the food on the table was to be considered as holy as meat on the altar. Many groups emphasized the importance of washings and immersions ("baptisms"). And for the broader reaches of the population, the worship of God through prayer and Torah study brought a measure of sanctity and communion with God that the Torah never envisioned.

As long as the temple, the sacrificial cult, and the priesthood remained the central, if not the only, religious institutions, Judaism remained a religion that allowed the individual little role. The development of the synagogue meant that the temple, for all its uniqueness, was no longer the only place where people could communicate with God. The development of prayer and Torah study meant that the sacrificial cult was no longer the only means for reaching God. The emergence of scribes and other sages meant that the priests no longer had a monopoly on religious truth. The synagogue is a lay institution, prayer and Torah study are activities open to all, and the scribe is but a learned layperson. These developments, and various theological innovations to be discussed in the second part of this chapter, show that during the Second Temple period Judaism was democratized. It was much more concerned with

the piety and fate of the individual Jew than the religion of preexilic Israel had been with the individual Israelite.

The democratization of religion and the sanctification of life outside the temple reached their apogee in the piety of various sectarian groups in Second Temple times and of the rabbis after 70 CE. Yet they fairly characterize nonsectarian and nonrabbinic Judaism as well, in both the land of Israel and the Diaspora. The earliest attestation of phylacteries and *mezuzot* is the *Letter of Aristeas* (158–159), a product of Alexandrian Judaism, written in Greek in the second century BCE and which otherwise is a proponent of allegorical exegesis. That the life of a loyal Jew is a constant spiritual quest marked by the contemplation of Scripture and the observance of the commandments is as true for Philo as for the rabbis. In sum, Judaism became a religious system that sanctified the life of each individual through the constant observance of the commandments of God. This system was incumbent not only on the religious elites but on all (male) Jews equally.

Ritual and Ethics

The legal portions of the Hebrew Bible are not familiar with the distinction between ritual and ethics or the distinction between rules that are peculiarly Israelite (or Jewish) and those that are followed by all civilized peoples. The prohibitions of idolatry and the worship of other gods are no less part of the Ten Commandments than are the prohibitions of murder and theft. The Holiness Code (Lev. 19) imagines that the quest for holiness includes the proper observance of the Sabbath and the sacrificial cult as well as helping the poor and loving one's neighbor as oneself. When they paraphrase the laws of the Torah, Philo, Josephus, and the *Temple Scroll* (from Qumran) depart from the order of the original, but none of them distinguishes "ritual" from "ethics" or implies that one is more important than the other.

The Wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible has a different perspective. It is universalist in outlook and cosmopolitan in spirit so that Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes ignore all the Israelite rituals and focus instead on virtues that are respected by all peoples (see esp. the code of a gentleman: Job 29–31). In this tradition, a Greek poem written by a Jew in the first century BCE (?) emphasizes the universal aspects of Jewish piety (ethics, proper sexual conduct, morality, etc.) and ignores all the "ritual" laws (Sabbath, food laws, etc.).[21] Most of the Wisdom literature of the later Second Temple period muted the universalism of the genre by "Judaizing" it. Ben Sira argued that

21. P. W. van der Horst, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978). Also translated in Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, 2 (1985): 565–82.

true wisdom was to be sought only in Israel and only in the law of Moses (Sir. 24). But even Ben Sira devoted most of his work to values shared universally. Similarly, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (probably second century BCE, although many scholars have argued that large portions of it are of Christian origin) preaches loyalty to the Torah and abhorrence of intermarriage but, influenced by the wisdom tradition, singles out for special mention the virtues that have universal appeal (honesty, integrity, generosity, industry, temperance, etc.). Tobit often went to Jerusalem for the feasts and carefully observed the food laws (Tobit 1:5–12), but in his deathbed instructions to his son (4:5–21), he ignores all the ritual laws. He emphasizes the importance of charity and the evil of immorality but fails to mention all the commandments he had observed throughout his life. This emphasis on ethics and universal virtues is the legacy of the wisdom tradition.

This wisdom tradition probably forms the background to the several attempts that were made to identify the most important commandments. Jesus answered that the most important commandments were the love of God and the love of one's neighbor (Matt. 22:34–40). A very similar position was attributed by rabbinic tradition to Hillel, a protorabbinic figure of the late first century BCE. The council described in Acts 15 decreed that gentile converts to Christianity need obey only three (or four) of the commandments: to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from illicit sexual relations, (from strangled things,) and from blood. This ruling is strikingly similar (if we omit "strangled things" and interpret "blood" to mean "bloodshed" rather than "the eating of blood") to the rabbinic law, formulated apparently during the Bar Kokhba period, which ordered a Jew to accept martyrdom if asked to violate the prohibitions of murder, idolatry, or adultery. During the second century of our era, the rabbis also formulated the notion of "Noahide laws," a set of prohibitions and obligations that were to be observed by all the children of Noah, that is, all of humanity. Gentiles who observed them would have a share in the world to come. (I shall return to the Noahide commandments in chap. 7.)[22]

Here, then, is evidence that some Jews were trying to identify the most important or the most broadly applicable of the commandments, but these efforts also did not privilege ethics over ritual. For all ancient thinkers, the core of Judaism was the recognition of God's sovereignty; this recognition was made manifest, in turn, by observing the requirements of the Torah, ritual and ethics alike. Wisdom teachers agreed. Ben Sira affirms the validity of the sacrificial cult even while he criticizes the insincerity and corruption of its practitioners (Sir. 34:18–35:11). Following the wisdom tradition,

22. Hillel: *b. Shabbat* 31a. Martyrdom: *b. Sanhedrin* 74a. Noahide laws: *b. Sanhedrin* 56a.

the Mishnaic tractate *Avot* (Fathers) ignores all the ritual laws, but it is most unlikely that the editor of the tractate was arguing that the ritual laws (including the Sabbath, food laws, festivals, etc.) were less important than spirituality and ethics. Some teachers emphasized the ethical element more than others did, but all believed that the command to love God was as much a part of the Torah as the commandment to love one's neighbor and that the love of God was most fully expressed by the observance of the laws of God's Torah.

Legalism and the Yoke of the Law

Another issue entirely, however, is the degree of success with which the ideology of democratization and sanctification penetrated the broad reaches of Jewish society. As usual, our sources are inadequate for an accurate portrayal of Judaism as actually lived by the Jews of antiquity. We may be sure that the vast majority of ancient Jews believed in God, circumcised their sons on the eighth day of life, abstained from pork, refrained from "work"[23] on the Sabbath, avoided any association with idolatry (such as sacrifices to "idols" or the emperor), prayed to God, venerated the Torah, honored the temple of Jerusalem, and so on. All of this may be true and accurate, but it does not tell us anything about Jewish religiosity and spirituality. No doubt many Jews were fully committed to the ideal of sanctifying life and deed through observance of the Torah. No doubt many Jews, perhaps the majority of the population, lacked the time, education, or temperament to implement this noble ideal. They were more interested in ensuring good health and good harvests than in communion with God or constant meditation on the words of the Torah. These Jews might employ "magic" and might resort to religious virtuosos who were not part of the recognized elite. Jesus spent much of his time healing the sick and performing miracles. In fact, many Jews in the first centuries of our era had a deserved reputation in the magical arts. Even in rabbinic times, as I shall discuss in chapter 7, many Jews had no patience for the rabbinic way of life. They respected the rabbis as "holy men" and miracle workers but were not dedicated to the rabbis' way of Torah.

And then there were Jews who integrated the new piety into their lives through the observance of the rituals and observances but did not seek to sanctify their lives thereby. They ignored the meaning and purpose of the entire regimen: the sanctification of life and the direction of one's thoughts

23. I place "work" in quotation marks because, no doubt, different Jewish teachers and different Jewish groups had different definitions of the scriptural prohibition of "work": May one rescue a stranded animal? May one heal? (Matthew 12:9–14)? Etc. etc. But we may be sure that the vast majority of ancient Jews refrained from "work" (defined one way or another) on the Sabbath.

to God and to God's revealed truth. These are the Jews whose "legalism"—reliance on the mere external observance of the rituals to ensure them favor in God's eyes—has loomed so large in Christian polemics against Judaism. Such people are to be found in all religious communities (including Christian, as the sermons of the church fathers abundantly attest) in all ages, and we may assume that such Jews existed in ancient times, even if we disbelieve the jaundiced portrayal of the Pharisees in the Gospels. Jesus was not the only preacher to attack the hypocrisy and ostentatiousness of the self-righteous.[24] Whether Jewish piety lends itself more readily than Christian piety to a focus on external observances rather than inner spirituality is a question that a historian cannot answer.

Most Jews observed the commandments of the Torah; some did not. Of these, some became apostates and left the Jewish community. Others simply ignored some or all of the commandments, while others protested that the Torah did not really demand literal observance of the ritual laws (see the discussion of apostasy and assimilation in chap. 2). We do not know how many such Jews there were in antiquity, but at least some of them found a home in early Christianity. According to the book of Acts (15:10), when the council of apostles and elders in Jerusalem was considering whether to impose circumcision, and by extension all the ritual requirements of the Torah, on (male) gentiles who converted to faith in Jesus, Peter said to them, "Why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear?" Compare the saying of Jesus, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens. . . . Take my yoke upon you. . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28–30; cf. 23:4). No doubt this rhetoric appealed to some Jews, although it is interesting to notice that it did not appeal to Paul. Paul pleaded with his gentile converts to reject circumcision and other observances of "the law" but did not base his argument on the law's "heaviness." Other Jews rejected both the rhetoric and the conclusion; for them the yoke of the Torah, the yoke of the commandments, and the yoke of the kingdom of heaven were not burdens but opportunities for serving God.

Women's Judaism

The Judaism that I have just described—a life of study and prayer, commandments and observances, synagogue and school—is a man's life. Not all Jewish men followed this regimen, to be sure, but only Jewish men were expected to

24. Cf. *Psalms of Solomon* 4, a text attributed by older scholars to a Pharisee.

observe it, because only Jewish men were full citizens of the Israelite polity. Ancient Judaism, like all other cultures and societies in antiquity, was *androcentric*, that is, it placed men at the center and assumed men to be the norm. The subordination of women to men was understood to be perfectly normal and right.

Jewish androcentrism begins with the Torah itself. The Ten Commandments, for example, are directed to the men of the community. As the Israelites prepare themselves for the great revelation, Moses instructs them, "Do not go near a woman" (Exod. 19:15). The Tenth Commandment includes "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife" (20:17). Women and wives were not envisioned as the recipients of the Ten Commandments. A covenant ceremony in Deuteronomy has the same perspective (Deut. 29:9–12):

> You stand assembled today, all of you, before the LORD your God—the leaders of your tribes, your elders, and your officials, all the men of Israel, your children, your women, and the aliens who are in your camp— . . . to enter into the covenant of the LORD your God.

The androcentric perspective of the text is clear: "you" (second-person plural) means "all the men of Israel." You, the men of Israel, are accompanied by your leaders, who are "the leaders of your tribes, your elders, and your officials," and by your retainers, your chattel, your dependents, who are "your children, your women, and the aliens who are in your camp." Women are not "you," they are "yours"—a big difference. They are included in the covenant only by virtue of the fact that they are "yours."

That the people of God consists in the first instance of its menfolk is made clear too by the covenant of circumcision (Gen. 17). Abraham and his male descendants bear "the sign of the covenant" in their flesh. It is a sign of membership in the people: "Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant" (Gen. 17:14). Circumcision becomes a significant marker of Jewishness during the Second Temple period; for Paul, as for Josephus, circumcision is virtually synonymous with loyalty to the Torah and observance of the commandments. Circumcision discriminates between men and women just as it discriminates between Jews and gentiles. Only men are signed by circumcision because only men are obligated and expected to observe all the commandments; only men are full members of the people of God.

The androcentrism of the Bible is maintained and developed by the Judaism of the Second Temple and the rabbinic periods. Virtually all the texts produced during these periods place men at the center and assume throughout that the model Jewish citizen is male. Even those texts that feature women

characters, like Tobit, Esther, and Judith, do not question or undo the androcentric assumptions of society. In his brief summary of Judaism, Josephus writes: "A wife, says the Law, is in all things inferior to a husband. Let her accordingly be submissive, not for violent ill-treatment, but that she may be directed; for God has given authority to the husband." In his brief summary of Judaism, Philo says almost exactly the same thing: "Wives must be in servitude to their husbands, a servitude not imposed by violent ill-treatment but promoting obedience in all things." Paul and his followers also exhorted wives to be subordinate to their husbands, as did any number of Greek and Roman moralists, and as did the rabbis of the Mishnah and the Talmud. The social expectations in antiquity for a respectable woman, of whatever ethnic or cultural persuasion, was submission and obedience to her husband. Men act; women are to be acted upon. Men dominate; women are to be dominated. A woman's role is to assist her husband.[25]

According to Philo and various other Greco-Jewish authors, public space was not suitable for women:[26]

> Market places and council halls and law-courts and gatherings and meetings where a large number of people are assembled, and open-air life with full scope for discussion and action—all these are suitable to men both in war and in peace. The women are best suited to the indoor life which never strays from the house. . . . A woman, then, should not be a busybody, meddling with matters outside her household concerns, but should seek a life of seclusion. She should not show herself off like a vagrant in the streets before the eyes of other men.

This same ideal also reached rabbinic piety: a woman's place is in the home.[27] Surely neither the rabbis nor Philo mean that a woman is to be a shut-in, a prisoner in her own home. A woman's place might be in the home, but everyone knew that there were times and occasions when it was perfectly appropriate for a woman to leave her house, for example, to go to the market, to visit friends, to escort children to their destinations, to go on pilgrimage

25. Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.24 §201 (I have substantially modified Thackeray's translation); Philo, *Hypothetica* 7.3, in Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 8.7.3; 1 Cor. 14:34–35; Eph. 5:22–24; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:11–12; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1–6. See David Balch, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981).

26. Philo, *On the Special Laws* 3.31 §§169–71; for further passages, see Pieter W. van der Horst's commentary on *Philo's Flaccus: The First Pogrom* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), *Against Flaccus* §89.

27. Rabbinic piety: *b. Yevamot* 77a and elsewhere.

to Jerusalem, and to attend the ceremonies of the temple.[28] What the rabbis and Philo mean is that women ought not to take a role in Jewish public life or to assert their authority in public, for a public role is unseemly for a woman.

Not all Jewish societies, or at least not all Jewish women, agreed with these judgments and these ideals. The noble women of the Hasmonean house, especially Salome Alexandra, who reigned from 76 to 67 BCE, took a prominent role in public affairs. Various Herodian princesses did as well. A series of inscriptions from Asia Minor (western Turkey) attest that women assumed leadership positions in various Jewish communities there.[29] Although Josephus states and the rabbis assume that a wife does not have the right to initiate a divorce against her husband, some Jewish women in antiquity did indeed divorce their husbands.[30] And let us not forget, of course, that these social ideals do not necessarily tell us anything about the lives of real men and women, real husbands and wives, who no doubt related to each other in all the myriad ways that have always characterized such relationships.

Even if some women in certain times and places were able to exert authority in their Jewish communities, this fact does not contradict or diminish Judaism's androcentric character—which, may I say again, was of a piece with the androcentrism of ancient society in general. Hence a difficult question: If the life of Judaism, as described in the previous sections of this chapter, was "incumbent . . . on all (male) Jews equally," what was the nature of women's Judaism? How did a woman express her Jewishness, and how did her Jewishness compare with that of a Jewish man? There is much recent scholarship on these questions, but the answers are elusive.[31]

Whatever the female experience of Judaism may have been, we may be sure that it was, at least for some women, meaningful. This is evident from two phenomena in which women figured prominently: conversion to Judaism and martyrdom. Among the converts to Judaism in antiquity, a fair number were women. Some scholars have even argued that a gentile woman was more likely to convert to Judaism than a gentile man because she did not face the obstacle of circumcision. Josephus reports that most of the women in Damascus, "with

28. Go to the market: *m. Bava Qamma* 8:6. Visit friends: *b. Gittin* 90a; *t. Sotah* 5.9. Pilgrimage: Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.9.3 §§423–26. Court of women in the temple: *m. Sukkah* 5:2 (and elsewhere).

29. Bernadette Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982).

30. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 15.7.10 §259 (the principle and an exception); Tal Ilan, *Integrating Women into Second Temple History* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 253–62 who discusses, among other texts, Mark 10:11–12; 1 Cor. 7:10–11.

31. See "Suggestions for Further Reading" for some bibliography on women in ancient Judaism.

few exceptions, had all gone over to the Jewish religion."[32] While it is not clear whether Josephus means "conversion" or "sympathizing" (for this distinction, see chap. 2 above), it is clear that gentile women found Judaism attractive; we may assume that they did so because it filled some social or spiritual need. Gentile women converted to Judaism, and native Jewish women died for it. Among the martyr stories told by the Jews of the Second Temple period is the story of the mother and her seven sons during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. After exhorting her sons to martyrdom, the mother herself meets her death. Other Jewish women defied the king's edict against circumcision by circumcising their sons. Philo recounts that during the riots in the time of the wicked legate Flaccus (38–41 CE), some Jewish women were arrested by the tyrant. Those who consented to eat swine's flesh that was put before them were released. "The more resolute women, however, were handed over to the torturers to suffer unbearable tortures." Judaism could inspire the loyalty of women even in the most extreme circumstances.[33]

At the margins of society, various pietistic groups afforded women an outlet for spiritual aspirations that could not normally be fulfilled in the general culture. Thus, as many scholars have noted, women figured prominently in the early Jesus movement. Although Jesus did not choose any women as apostles, and did not make any pronouncements seeking to ameliorate the status of women, at least not in our canonical Gospel texts, women are present in many Gospel stories and are the first witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus.[34] Christian storytellers could imagine that Mary and the infant Jesus received a prophecy from Anna, a widow who "never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer" day and night (Luke 2:36–38). Such women could be found in early Christianity. Praying women are also prominent in the group known as the *Therapeutae* (Greek for "healers" or "worshipers"). Known to us from Philo, this was a Jewish group of pietists and ascetics in Egypt who gathered regularly for communal eating, studying, praying, and singing. Philo explains that the group consisted of men and women, "most of them aged virgins, who have kept their chastity not under compulsion . . . but of their own free will in their ardent yearning for wisdom. . . . They have spurned the pleasures of the body and desire no mortal offspring." At the communal banquet the men and women sit apart. After the meal, the men and women form themselves into two separate choirs and sing hymns of praise of

32. Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.20.2 §560.

33. Mother and seven sons: 2 Macc. 7. Circumcision: 1 Macc. 1:60–61. Philo, *Against Flaccus* §96.

34. On women as apostles, or at least as possessing apostolic authority, see commentaries on Rom. 16:7; as witnesses to the resurrection: Matt. 27:55–56; 28:1–8 (and parallels); Paul omits (suppresses?) the role of women as witnesses, 1 Cor. 15:4–8.

God, then join together for a grand finale.[35] Scholars debate how much of this description, for which we are dependent solely on Philo, is real and how much is idealized fiction. I shall return to the Therapeutae in chapter 5. In any case, the main point—that there were groupings not in the mainstream of Jewish society that gave women, especially unmarried women ("virgins and widows"), a respectable outlet for their spiritual and social yearnings—seems plausible enough. Certainly the history of Christianity, ancient, medieval, and modern, is filled with many such groups.

Other socially marginal groups, in contrast, restricted a woman's place to a much greater degree than did general society. According to both Philo and Josephus, the Essenes excluded women altogether, although Josephus goes on to note that some Essenes permitted marriage for the sake of procreation. Several of the Qumran scrolls (notably the *Manual of Discipline*) indeed presume an all-male environment, although others (notably the *Damascus Document*) presume a society of men, women, and children. A few female skeletons have been discovered at the cemetery adjacent to the Qumran settlement; who these women were we do not know, but these few skeletons are not sufficient to undo the strong impression that the Qumran settlement was overwhelmingly, if not exclusively, male.[36] No doubt this exclusion of women would have been justified on the grounds of menstrual impurity. The *Temple Scroll* rules that women may not dwell in Jerusalem, no matter what their menstrual state, and that all cities in the land of Israel must have areas outside the city walls where menstruants and other impure people could reside until they were purified and able to rejoin society. This is the extremist legislation of an extremist group. All law-observant Jews, no doubt, paid attention to the rules of menstrual impurity laid down by Leviticus (15:19–24; 18:19; 20:18), but there is no evidence that ancient Jews, in either Second Temple or rabbinic times, isolated the menstruant from society. Thus the Gospel story about the woman with a twelve-year discharge does not give any indication that the woman suffered any degree of social isolation because of her impurity (Matt. 9:18–26 and parallels). The Qumran Jews, who apparently created exclusively male societies and restricted the mobility of women in general and of menstruating women in particular, were far more rigorous in these matters than was Jewish society as a whole.

In sum, women's Judaism remains elusive. It is relatively easy to collect references from ancient Jewish literature to show what men thought was the

35. Philo, *On the Contemplative Life* 8 §68 (aged virgins); 9 §69 (sit apart); 11 §§83–85 (separate choirs).

36. Jodi Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 163–87.

proper place of women in law and society, but it is difficult to reconstruct the experience of being a Jewish woman in antiquity. What did Jewish women think of their place in Jewish society? Were they content with their lot or frustrated? Spiritually fulfilled or malnourished? We cannot be sure, but the limited amount of evidence available suggests that most Jewish women found ways to make their Judaism meaningful, so much so that non-Jewish women found the life of Jewish women attractive. We must be wary of projecting our own values and aspirations on ancient Jewish women.

BELIEFS

Although ancient Judaism eschewed dogmas and creeds, its liturgy contains the closest approximation to a "normative" or "official" theology. As I discussed above, the temple prayer of the priests featured the recitation of the three paragraphs of the Shema. The first paragraph (Deut. 6:4–9) commands the Israelites to love God and meditate on his words constantly. The theme of this paragraph is the recognition of the suzerainty of God, what the Mishnah calls "the acceptance of the yoke of the kingdom of heaven." In the second paragraph (Deut. 11:13–21), the Israelites are warned that they will suffer drought and famine if they sin but will enjoy prosperity if they observe God's word. The theme of this paragraph is the recognition of God's justice, what the Mishnah calls "the acceptance of the yoke of the commandments." The third paragraph (Num. 15:37–41) details the obligation of placing special fringes on one's clothing. The theme of this paragraph might appear to be the same as that of the first, the obligation to meditate constantly on God's commandments, but the Mishnah emphasizes instead the last verse of the paragraph ("I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God") and gives as its theme the exodus from Egypt: redemption.[37]

Thus, according to the Mishnah, the three themes of the Shema are the kingship of God, reward and punishment, and redemption. It is impossible to know whether the Mishnah's interpretation accurately reflects either the original meaning of the three scriptural paragraphs or the original intent of the people who first arranged them to constitute a unified prayer. However, the Shema, by virtue of its central place in the liturgy, serves well as a convenient outline of Jewish beliefs, much as the Ten Commandments served Philo and some medieval Jewish philosophers as a convenient summary of the laws of the Torah.

37. *M. Berakhot* 2:2 and 1:5.

Kingship of God

The first line of the Shema declares that God is "one." In the preexilic period, the Israelites had diverse views of God's oneness. Some passages of the Hebrew Bible ascribe to God absolute uniqueness, for example, "The LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other" (Deut. 4:39), while other passages (esp. in poetry) ascribe to God only a relative superiority, for example, "Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?" (Exod. 15:11). Concerning the extent of God's power, there is a similar inner biblical tension. Some passages seem to say that the power and attention of the God of Israel are directed solely toward the people of Israel, while others state explicitly that the God of Israel is the God of the entire world and of all peoples. Contrast a regional view, on one hand: "Should you [the Ammonites and Moabites] not possess what your god Chemosh gives you to possess? And should we not be the ones to possess everything that the LORD our God has conquered for our benefit?" (Judg. 11:24, part of a letter of Jephthah to the king of the Ammonites)—with an expansive view, on the other hand: "It is I [the LORD] who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the people and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever I please" (Jer. 27:5, declaring that God has destined Nebuchadnezzar to rule a large empire).

The Hebrew Bible also has a vitriolic and extensive polemic against Israelite worship of any god other than the God of Israel, a polemic that regularly equates "idol worship" with "the worship of foreign gods," but the historical narratives show that many Israelites of both the northern and southern kingdoms actively worshiped Baal and other gods alongside the God of Israel. The usual scholarly explanation of these facts is to posit a development between the early faith of Israel and the later beliefs introduced by the prophets. At first the Israelites believed that their God is merely the God of their nation, mightier than the other gods but not materially different from them. The prophets, however, taught that the God of Israel is the Lord of the entire universe, controlling the destiny of all peoples, and that the Israelites must worship this one God alone.

By the sixth century BCE, the prophetic view was clearly triumphant. At the very beginning of the Second Temple period, Second Isaiah hailed the God of Israel as the creator of the world and mocked the gods of wood and stone as things of naught (Isa. 44). God's universal power is also highlighted in the epithet widely used in the Persian period, "the God of heaven [or: "the heavens"]" (e.g., Ezra 1:2; Jonah 1:9). That God is the omnipotent, omniscient creator of the universe, exalted above all his creatures, ruling in majestic splendor, and ultimately beyond human ken, is a common motif in the

literature of the Second Temple and rabbinic periods. Like the monarchs of Persia and the Hellenistic empires who ruled over the Jews, God too was the all-powerful Lord of an enormous empire. Whether the product of internal development or external influence, this conception of God brought with it many ambiguities and tensions. Theological systematizers demand consistency, but religious people of all times and places have always been able to live with conflicting truth claims. So too the Jews of the Second Temple period: they were able to affirm the truth of conflicting doctrines about God. I shall briefly examine the four major tensions in the new conception of God. They are universalism versus particularism, monotheism versus polytheism, immanence versus transcendence, the God of the philosophers versus the God of the Bible.

Universalism versus Particularism

God is both the Lord of all, the supreme deity, and also the national God of Israel, who chose Israel from among all the nations and revealed his Torah to it alone. The tension between these conceptions is as evident in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Gen. 1–11 with Gen. 12–50) as in the literature of the Second Temple and rabbinic periods. Just as some texts emphasize universal ethical norms while others emphasize the Jewish ritual laws (see above), similarly some texts, especially apocalypses attributed to figures who lived before God's selection of Abraham (e.g., Enoch), emphasize God's universal dominion and deemphasize or omit the covenant with Israel, while others do the reverse. Some texts, written in the face of disaster (e.g., *4 Ezra*, a response to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE), lament that God, the Lord of the universe, has bestowed power upon the gentiles, but that God, the Lord of Israel, has not protected his people (see below). Christianity resolved the tension between these conceptions by affirming the universality of God and denying all doctrines that bound God to a particular *ethnos* (nation) or land (even if the Christians also affirmed, somewhat paradoxically, that they were the new people of God). Most Jews, however, were not prepared to abandon the belief that they, the people of Israel, stood in a special relationship with God. In its rabbinic interpretation, the Shema proclaims the existence of the one God who is king of the universe as well as king of the Jews.

Monotheism versus Polytheism

By Hellenistic times, the phrase *Heis Theos*, "God is One!" (or "There is one God!"), became a Jewish slogan, but monotheism is an ambiguous concept. Clearly it means the belief in one supreme God, but that belief may or may not involve a denial of the existence of other supernatural beings. The Jewish monotheism of antiquity did not exclude belief in many and diverse

supernatural beings aside from God. Precisely because the Deity had grown so in power and prestige, a need was felt during Second Temple times to populate the intermediate world with beings of all sorts, notably angels.

The Hebrew Bible occasionally refers to angels, the supernatural messengers that God uses on an ad hoc basis for special purposes (e.g., Gen. 22:15; Exod. 23:20). During the Second Temple period, the role of angels increased dramatically in Jewish theology. A mighty potentate requires numerous attendants, and God's heavenly palace was equipped with angels far more numerous and far more differentiated in function and title than were envisioned in Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1. The palace was located in the seventh (or eighth) heaven, each heaven being guarded by myriads of angels. Each of the nations in God's cosmic empire had its own angelic supervisor called a "prince"; Michael was the prince of Israel, who stood up for his people in times of distress (Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1). At the end of time, God would be aided by his angelic hosts in the final battle against the forces of darkness and evil. Thus the angels fulfilled various tasks: they guarded the heavenly palace, sang hymns of praise to their creator, and served in the army of the God of Hosts; they functioned as God's intermediaries in his communication with humans, notably as the sources for the revelations experienced by apocalyptic visionaries; and they functioned as humanity's intermediaries in its communication with God by bringing people's prayers before God and interceding with him on their behalf.

For Philo and other Greek-speaking Jews, the *Logos*, God's "speech" or "reason" (often mistranslated "Word"), served even more than the angels to mediate between God and the world. Logos has a wide variety of meanings, but the most common one is the manifestation of God that comes into contact with the material world and is perceptible by humans. God himself is far removed from this world so that it is only through his "speech" that we know him and through his "speech" that he created the universe, which we perceive with our senses. Philo is not clear whether the Logos is merely an "aspect" (or attribute) of God, or whether Logos is a "being" in its own right (cf. John 1:1). Whereas angels, says Philo, are our intermediaries with God, the Logos is God's intermediary with us.[38]

The Logos of Philo resembles the figure of Wisdom in Proverbs 8. Wisdom declares (8:22), "The Lord created [or "acquired"] me at the beginning of his work," and describes how she was at God's side during the creation of the world (8:30): "Then I was beside him, like a master worker [the meaning of the Hebrew is obscure]; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always." Like the Logos, Wisdom assists God during the act of creation (or

38. Philo on angels: Philo, *On Dreams* 1.22 §141.

should we say that God's Wisdom was manifested in the creation?). Because of its obscurities and ambiguities, the passage does not make clear whether Wisdom is merely an attribute of God or whether she is a being endowed with some measure of autonomy and independence. Philo identified Wisdom with the Logos. John and other Christians identified Wisdom with the Logos, and the Logos with Christ. The rabbis of the third and fourth centuries identified Wisdom with Torah (cf. Sir. 24) and argued that God created the world by consulting the Torah. Many of the gnostic creation myths feature the figure of *Sophia* (Greek for Wisdom) as one of the chief supernatural beings through whom the world was created. Thus the personified figure of Wisdom was another power that intermediated between God and the world, especially at the creation.[39]

In addition to the angels, the Logos, and Wisdom, who were either morally good or morally neutral, the intermediate world was also populated by wicked angels and malevolent spirits (or demons). In the Hebrew Bible, the verb *stn* ("to oppose," "to accuse," or "to trouble") and its derivative nouns refer either to humans (e.g., 1 Kgs. 11:14, 23, 25) or to angels (e.g., Num. 22:22, 32) who cause someone mischief. In the early Second Temple period, the term "the accuser" (*ha satan*) began to refer to a member of the heavenly court who, while still subservient to God, was able to exercise some initiative on his own (Job 1–2; Zech. 3:1–2). "Satan" was not yet a proper name (many translations of 1 Chr. 21:1 read "Satan," but a more likely rendering of the word is "a troublemaker"). The third and second centuries BCE, however, witnessed the emergence of Satan as a clearly defined being. Sometimes called Mastema or Belial or other names, he was the supernatural leader of the forces of evil. He was an enemy both of God and of the righteous and was blamed for most of the maladies that befall humanity. Protection from these malevolent forces could be obtained through prayer and piety or through amulets and spells (cf. Tobit). It was widely believed that illnesses were the symptom of possession by one of these hostile powers, and so medical care often took the form of exorcisms, the "abjuring" or "casting away" of the demonic force.

The impulse to believe that myriads of angels serve the Lord both in this world and in the world above was apparently the belief in God's cosmic majesty. The more exalted God became, the more he required retainers to sing his glory and intermediaries to communicate with the world. The impulse to believe that myriads of demons and spirits delight in attacking humanity was apparently the desire to explain the origins of evil in the universe. If God is

39. Sophia is the Logos: Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation* 1.19 §65; cf. Wisdom of Solomon 9:1–2. Logos and Christ: John 1:1. Wisdom and Torah: *Genesis Rabbah* on Gen. 1:1.

good and if the world that God created is good (Gen. 1), whence evil? I shall return to this point in my discussion of theodicy (see below).

One God, then, but many supernatural beings and powers. Is this not a thinly disguised polytheism masquerading as monotheism? For the rabbis of the Talmud, at least, the distinction is reasonably clear. God created the universe, including all its supernatural beings (Gen. 1 neglected to mention that the angels were created by God, but the gap was filled by rabbinic lore, as it had been by *Jubilees* 2:2), and only God is endowed with the will and ability to act independently. Angels only perform the will of their creator. From the enigmatic plural of Genesis 1:26 ("Let *us* make Adam in our image"), the rabbis deduced that the angels assisted God in the creation of Adam; yet their monotheism was compromised not by the belief in the existence of supernatural powers but by any attribution of independence to them. Consequently, it was forbidden to pray to any being other than God, since such imprecation would imply that a being other than God was an independent power. Monotheism demanded monolatry, the worship of only one God from among many supernatural beings. So far the rabbinic theory. In practice the rabbis were less certain that the *demons* lacked the ability to act independently, but while defense against demons was permissible, the use of demons was not. (Following Deut. 18:9–14, the rabbis did not doubt either the existence of spirits or the efficacy of witchcraft, which was forbidden.) Any prayer directed to any supernatural being other than God, whether that being was allied with God or opposed to him, violated rabbinic monotheism. At best, it was the heresy of belief in two heavenly powers. At worst, it was polytheism.

This was the system worked out by the rabbis of the third and fourth centuries CE. Many of their Jewish contemporaries, however, ignored the distinctions that the rabbis wrought so finely. They addressed prayers to angels, hailing their power and beseeching them to grant their requests.[40]

The rabbinic system mirrors the theology of some strands of Second Temple Judaism. The monotheism ascribed by Josephus to Abraham closely resembles the rabbinic view: Abraham "was the first to boldly declare that God, the creator of the universe, is one, and that, if any other being contributed anything to man's welfare, each did so by his command and not in virtue of its own inherent power." The cult of the temple, like the cult of the rabbinic synagogue, recognized God alone and ignored all other supernatural beings. But in other circles, angels and, especially, demons were given some measure

40. Prayers to angels: see esp. *Sepher ha Razim = The Book of the Mysteries*, trans. Michael A. Morgan (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983). Various Christian writers refer to the Jewish worship of angels; see, e.g., Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.26 and 5.14, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), 26, 274.

of independent power. Even if Satan and his hosts were created by God (cf. Col. 1:16), they act as enemies of God and as the opponents of his will. The angelic "archons" who control this world and try to prevent human happiness and salvation also are not easily reconciled with a monotheistic worldview. Demonology and magic flourished. Philo too, in a few passages, seems to describe the Logos and God's "powers" not merely as extensions of God but as if they were independent beings. Many literary works of the period emphasize that Judaism is superior to polytheism because belief in the One is superior to belief in the many, but the contrast was not always as neat and simple as this rhetoric suggests. And even within polytheist circles, many philosophers would agree with the rabbinic analysis of the relationship between the chief God and his subordinates. These polytheist philosophers denied the Jewish doctrines of creation, revelation, and the election of Israel and used the term "gods" in ways that would have made Jews uncomfortable, but otherwise the structure of their theology was very close to that of the Jews.[41]

Jewish monotheism in antiquity is not easily defined. In paradoxical fashion, the very conception that highlighted God's uniqueness and emphasized his sovereignty almost necessitated the belief in angels and other intermediary forces. Premodern Judaism never fully resolved this tension. In the Middle Ages, Maimonides defined monotheism to be the belief in only one supernatural being. Demons and spirits are mere figments of the imagination; angels, the Logos, and the divine powers are mere "attributes" of God that have no existence whatever independent of the Deity. But this radical monotheism of Maimonides was rare even in the Middle Ages and is unattested in antiquity. Christianity resolved this tension by arguing that the Monad was plural, that the One consisted of Three, one of whom, who was both human and divine, was the chief intermediary between God and the world and the main object of Christian worship. Here then is a clear difference between Jewish Logos theology and Christian theology. Christians worshiped the Logos as God the Son of God, as God incarnate in human flesh. Non-Christian Jews like Philo, who believed in the Logos, did so in order to understand how God could create the world while maintaining a respectable philosophical distance from it. Nevertheless Philo and other Logos-believing Jews did not worship the Logos, nor did they believe that it would ever become incarnate in a human

41. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 1.7.1 §155. Logos a separate being in Philo: see the passages discussed in Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 112–16. Pagan monotheism: see the integrative tendencies in various late-antique religious systems, e.g., the Hermetic literature, the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus and Julian, etc. See Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

body. These beliefs became central to formative Christianity but to no other form of Judaism.

Immanence versus Transcendence

Does God dwell "in" the world or far above it? The answer, of course, is both. At the dedication of the First Temple, Solomon declared, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built!" (1 Kgs. 8:27). Indeed, many biblical passages say that the occupant of the temple was not God but God's "Name" (Deut. 12:11) or "Glory" (1 Kgs. 8:11). The developments described in the previous paragraphs testify to the growth of God's transcendence. The further God was removed from the world, the more the space in between had to be populated with divine beings. But God's transcendence did not, in any way, negate his nearness to those who believed in him. To many polytheists of the Hellenistic period, the gods seemed distant and uncaring. In 291 BCE, the Athenians sang to their ruler, "The other gods either are far away or do not have ears or do not exist or do not pay attention to us at all; you, however, we see before us, made of neither wood nor stone, but a real god. To you we pray." Such was the flattery the Athenians heaped on their mortal ruler.[42] The Jews would have agreed with the Athenians that the worship of the gods was silly and useless (e.g., 1 Kgs. 18:27; Ps. 115:4–8), but for the Jews the nearness of God was as real as the nearness of the general Demetrius Poliorcetes was for the Athenians. Although the God of the Jews was the king of the universe, he also was near enough to hearken to the prayers of humanity.

This paradox is highlighted in a remark of a fourth-century rabbi: "Pagan gods seem to be near [because their images are so near] but in reality are far away [because they do not hearken to prayer]; but the Holy One, blessed is he, seems distant [because of his transcendence] but there is none closer than he [because he hearkens to prayer]."[43] Whatever feelings the Jews had about God's elusiveness and ineffectiveness were caused not by his transcendence or remoteness but by the incomprehensibility of his actions. Why does a moral God allow evil to flourish? To this question I shall return below.

The God of the Philosophers versus the God of the Bible

The God of the Hebrew Bible is for the most part an anthropomorphic and anthropopathic being, that is, a God who has the form and emotions of humans.

42. Duris of Samos as quoted by Athenaeus 6.63, trans. in Loeb Classical Library, 253 D–F. For the Greek text, see Felix Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1923–58; and reprinted), no. 76 F 13.

43. R. Pinhas in the name of R. Judah ben Simon, in *y. Berakhot* 9.1, 62b–63a in the Vilna edition, 13a in the Venice edition.

He (God is a he) walks and talks, has arms and legs, becomes angry or happy or sad, changes his mind, speaks to humans and is addressed by them, and closely supervises the affairs of the world. The god of the philosophers is a different sort of being altogether: abstract (the Prime Mover, the First Cause, the Mind or Soul of the Universe), immutable, and relatively unconcerned with the affairs of humanity. The tension between these rival conceptions of the Deity is evident in the work of Philo, who is able to find a philosophically respectable God in the Torah only through allegorical exegesis (see chap. 6). Philo is particularly careful to sanitize the anthropomorphic and anthropopathic passages. In the land of Israel, the pressure to interpret the Bible in this fashion was less intense, but even here many of the Targumim, the Aramaic translations of Scripture, reduce or eliminate scriptural anthropomorphisms.

Perhaps some Jews were concerned about the very unphilosophical image of God in the Hebrew Scriptures, but most were not. Apocalyptic visionaries and mystics persisted in seeing God sitting on his throne surrounded by his angelic attendants. The rabbis had no difficulty in believing in a God who loves and is loved and with whom one can argue. The masses needed (and need!) a God who is accessible and understandable. In the fourth century, most of the monks in Egypt understood the anthropomorphisms of Scripture literally. After all, God declares, "Let us make humankind in our image" (Gen. 1:26), proof that the human image is the image of God. After hearing a pastoral letter from the bishop of Alexandria and a sermon from the abbot that insisted that the scriptural anthropomorphisms were to be understood allegorically because God has no shape, one elderly monk arose to pray but could not. "Woe is me! They have taken my God away from me!" he wailed.[44] Popular piety does not need or want an immutable and shapeless Prime Mover; it wants a God who reveals himself to people, listens to prayer, and can be grasped in human terms. This is the God of the Shema, the Bible, and the liturgy. This is the God of practically all the Hebrew and Aramaic, and some of the Greek, Jewish literature of antiquity. It is not, however, the God of the philosophers.

Reward and Punishment

A major issue throughout this period is the justice of God, known since Leibniz as *theodicy*. God is the king over his people and over the universe, and it is the responsibility of a king to maintain justice in his domain. Indeed, Absalom succeeded in deposing King David because the son administered justice more

44. John Cassian, *Conferences* 10.3, in *Western Asceticism*, ed. Owen Chadwick (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958; often reprinted), 235.

effectively than the father (2 Sam. 15:1–6). The basic thesis of almost every book in the Hebrew Bible is that God controls human affairs (or at least, the affairs of the Israelites), rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked. Although God's control is evident in many ways, most spectacularly through the display of miracles, the Bible itself is aware that the ways of God are sometimes unclear since his ways are not the ways of humanity.

The second paragraph of the Shema explains that the Israelites are rewarded for their righteousness by rain and prosperity and punished for their wickedness by drought and famine. Rain was not God's only weapon. Success in battle against foreign enemies, good health, and an abundance of all good things were proffered to those who followed God's commandments, and their opposites to those who did not. This was justice maintained on a national level; I shall return to this theme in the section below on redemption. Here I discuss the reward and punishment of the individual.

In the preexilic period, the individual was seen more as a member of the whole than as a separate entity. This perspective is evident in many passages, most clearly in God's explanation of his ways to Moses:

> The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation. (Exod. 34:6–7; cf. Num. 14:18)

In these verses, the visitation of the sins of the parents upon the children (intergenerational or "diachronic" responsibility) is considered an aspect of God's *mercy*, not anger. Although God "forgives iniquity" (a better translation would be "tolerates iniquity"), he insists that the guilty party be punished, but through his mercy he allows the punishment to be spread over a span of three or four generations. From the point of view of the parents, this is real mercy. From the point of view of the children, this might seem to be unjust, but the Israelites (at first) did not think so, because they readily accepted the fact that an individual was part of a clan and a nation and that one's fate was indissolubly linked to that of one's ancestors, descendants, and contemporaries. Later in the preexilic period, opinions changed and reckoned the visitation of the parents' sins upon the children as an aspect of divine *anger*. One concession was now made to the right of the individual: accumulated guilt devolved upon the third and fourth generation only if the children wickedly persisted in the sinful ways of the parents (Exod. 20:5).

The destruction of the temple in 587 BCE and the exile to Babylonia delivered this system a mortal blow. While it seemed clear enough that God

was using Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians as his "rod of anger" against Israel, why did God allow his temple to be destroyed? Did the punishment fit the crime? No one denied that the Israelites sinned, but the punishment was so great and the suffering so enormous that God appeared to some to be a malevolent deity who inflicts suffering on the innocent (Lam. 3:1–19). Some Israelites were content with the notion that they were suffering in part for the guilt accumulated by prior generations (Lam. 5:7), but many complained that this was the work of an unjust God. "The parents [MT: fathers] have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" was a widely quoted proverb of the time (Jer. 31:29; Ezek. 18:2). A few Israelites even attributed their misfortunes to their failure to maintain their worship of the Queen of Heaven (Jer. 44:15–19)—in other words, they were being punished by a deity, but the deity was not the God of Israel! Clearly a new understanding of theodicy was needed.

In his response to the Israelites who complained that they were suffering for their ancestors' sins, Ezekiel responded that each person is judged by God individually. "The person who sins shall die. A child shall not suffer for the iniquity of a parent, nor a parent suffer for the iniquity of a child" (Ezek. 18:20). This notion was a major departure from the system that God himself revealed to Moses in Exodus 34. Another novel doctrine introduced by Ezekiel in the same chapter was the efficacy of repentance for the individual (see below). A sinner who repents is no longer a sinner in the eyes of God, and a righteous person who goes astray is no longer righteous. The sinner and the righteous are each rewarded according to their new state. These ideas, in conjunction with the doctrine of retribution in the hereafter, were enormously influential.

Immortality and Resurrection

Ezekiel claims that all persons receive their just deserts from God. The author of Chronicles, a work of the Persian or early Hellenistic period, implemented this theory in his revision of the book of Kings. The Deuteronomic historian was satisfied with the doctrine of corporate responsibility, but the Chronicler was not. For example, Kings explains that the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed in 587 BCE on account of the sins of Manasseh (2 Kgs. 21:10–16; 23:26–27; 24:3), a king who had reigned a century before the destruction; the author of Chronicles changes the narrative (2 Chr. 36:11–16) because he believes that no one suffers for a crime committed by someone else. Such a cheery view of the world, however, does not accord with experience. Often the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper. This was the question raised forcefully by the book of Job, a work of unknown date that scholars often ascribe to the Persian or Hellenistic period. Job rejects the idea that sins of the

parents are visited on the children and that reward and punishment are meted out in an afterlife. Why then does he, a righteous man, suffer? The book suggests that suffering is not always punitive and therefore not always a sign of wickedness. Sometimes God wishes to test the righteous or to purify them of their minor imperfections, ideas that would have an enormous impact on both Jewish and Christian piety.[45] Ultimately, however, the book concludes that God's ways are unknowable and that humanity must not presume to understand what is beyond its ken.

Job's answer, then, is that there is no answer. The third and second centuries BCE witnessed the birth of intense speculation about the origins of evil, on the one hand, and the mysteries of theodicy on the other. In this period for the first time we hear of fallen angels, one of whom becomes the cosmic leader of the forces of evil, and of the corruption introduced on earth by these beings. Many of these legends were attached to Genesis 6:1–5, the fragmentary account of the miscegenation of the "sons of God" (or however the phrase *benei elohim* ought to be translated) with the fair daughters of men. Even in the book of Job, Satan was beginning to emerge as a clearly defined figure (Job 1), and it was not long before he (or his equivalent) became the leader of the forces of evil, who delight in causing troubles for humans and leading them astray (see above).

These ideas developed rapidly. At Qumran they formed the heart of a dualistic system that divided the entire world into two camps, the sons of light and the sons of darkness. The sons of light—that is, the members of the sect—will aid the angel of light in the final struggle against the forces of evil, led by the angel of darkness. This cosmic struggle is mirrored by the struggle within each person of the Spirit of Truth with the Spirit of Perversity (see below). Various passages in the Pauline writings echo similar sentiments, although not in such extreme form.[46] In the second century of our era, many Christian "gnostics" developed a radical dualism explaining that the world was created either by the leader of the forces of evil or through a series of mistakes and accidents. These gnostic systems explained why evil seems to triumph in the world, but their explanation was gained at the expense of monotheism. In fact, it is difficult to reconcile any of these views with monotheism, as I discussed above. This fact is not particularly surprising, since many of these ideas entered Judaism from Platonism and Zoroastrianism, in both of which they are parts of dualistic theological structures. Many of the gnostic systems are

45. From the Second Temple period, see, e.g., Tobit, *Psalms of Solomon*, and *2 Baruch*.

46. Qumran "sons of light and sons of darkness": see the *Manual of Discipline* 3–4. Pauline passages: Eph. 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:5; cf. 1 John 4:6. See David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), 25–28, 54–60.

both nonmonotheistic and anti-Jewish in that they identify the evil Creator with the God of the Jews (who is also the God of the Hebrew Bible). Nevertheless, most scholars now agree that these nonmonotheistic, anti-Jewish ideas have their ultimate origins, at least in part, in the Jewish speculations of the Second Temple period.

For the first time, in the third and second centuries BCE we also hear of immortality and resurrection as the rewards that await the righteous and of eternal punishments that await the wicked. In the preexilic portions of the Bible, *Sheol* is the ultimate destination for the disembodied souls of everyone, righteous and wicked alike. In Sheol, much like the Greek Hades, there is no judgment and no reward. A few poetical passages imply that God can bring back from Sheol those who have been consigned there (1 Sam. 2:6) or that the dead might live again (Isa. 26:19; Ezek. 37:1–14), but these are metaphorical expressions of God's prowess, not crucial elements in a system of theodicy. Neither Job nor Ben Sira (about 200 BCE) knows anything of reward and punishment in the hereafter. Ecclesiastes, almost certainly a product of the Hellenistic period, asks (3:21), "Who knows whether the human spirit goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to the earth?" Since neither the righteous nor the wicked receives their due in either life or death, what is the incentive to be righteous? Where is God's justice? These are the taunts that the righteous hear in the book of *Enoch*, in Wisdom of Solomon, and in many other works, including rabbinic literature. Since the present is inexplicable, the answer must be the future. Death does not mark the end; the righteous—and perhaps the wicked too—must receive their due in the hereafter.

The new doctrine appears in inchoate form in a section of the book of *Enoch*, which derives from the third century BCE (*1 Enoch* 22 and 27). A clearer account is provided by Daniel 12:2–3, a description of the events of the end time:

> Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky; and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Daniel seems to imply that only some ("many") of the dead will be resurrected, presumably only those who did not receive their due in their lifetimes. The elect will shine forever like the stars of heaven, a notion that scholars call "astral immortality." Later texts supply many of the details that Daniel omits. In some the resurrection is reserved for everyone, in some for the righteous alone, while in others (as in Daniel) for some of the righteous and some of the wicked. In many texts the resurrection is accompanied by a judgment scene, although whether the judgment is to take place immediately after death or

only in the end time was never very clear. In some texts the resurrection is bodily, while in others it is only spiritual. How the resurrection is to be coordinated with the arrival of the messiah (a concept that Dan. 12 omits) was also the subject of intense speculation.

Although the roots of the doctrine of resurrection are much older than the book of Daniel, the major impulse to its acceptance by the Jews was the crisis of the mid-second century. For the first time in recorded history, a nation fought a battle for religious liberty. For the first time in Jewish history, men, women, and children were killed because they refused to violate the demands of the Torah. Just as the desecration of the temple and the persecution of Judaism provided the impulse for visions of national redemption (see below), the death of righteous martyrs provided the impulse for belief in immortality and resurrection. Like Daniel in the lions' pit and Daniel's friends in the fiery furnace, the martyrs were tortured but emerged "alive." Through death they attained immortal life. This idea frequently recurs in the earliest extant Jewish martyrology, 2 Maccabees 6–7, a product of Greek-speaking Judaism, which describes the death of an old man and of seven brothers at the hands of Antiochus Epiphanes. That martyrs would be resurrected to life eternal was a doctrine that played an enormous role in the development of Christianity.

A close ally of the doctrine of bodily resurrection is the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Because of its affinities with the speculations of Greek philosophy, this doctrine was popular with Greek-speaking Jews, notably Philo (although 2 Maccabees 7 explicitly refers to bodily resurrection). When Josephus describes the three Jewish sects, he presents them as "philosophies" arguing about the immortality of the soul.[47]

I began this discussion of life after death with Ezekiel's argument that each person receives their due from God in this world. Since reality, then as now, did not confirm such optimism, the Jews of the Second Temple period elaborated the doctrine of reward and punishment in the hereafter. Ezekiel rejected the doctrine of familial responsibility (the visitation of the sins of the parents upon the children), but that doctrine at least explained why the righteous and the wicked were not rewarded in their lifetime. The doctrine of reward and punishment in the hereafter was a much more elegant solution.

Repentance and Free Will

Human courts do not accept repentance. Criminals must pay the penalty for their crimes. A human judge might be swayed by the contrition of the accused to lighten the penalty, but the act of contrition obliterates neither the crime

47. Philo, *On Giants* 13 §§60–61; idem, *Sacrifices of Abel and Cain* 2 §5. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 13.5.9 §§172–73 (and elsewhere; see chap. 5 below).

nor the punishment. Not so the divine judge. Wicked persons who repent can escape the consequences of their misdeeds. This was Ezekiel's argument, but the extent to which repentance could remove sin or, what is perhaps more significant, sinfulness was a question that aroused much speculation in the Second Temple and rabbinic periods.

Ezekiel's theodicy is predicated on the fact that people have free will. People decide whether to be righteous or wicked, whether to change their ways or not, and are rewarded accordingly. In the same tradition, Ben Sira argues that a sinner cannot evade responsibility for his deeds. "Do not say, 'It was the Lord's doing that I fell away. . . . It was he who led me astray'" (Sir. 15:11–12). "Do not say, 'I am hidden from the Lord, and who from on high has me in mind? Among so many people I am unknown, for what am I in a boundless creation?'" (16:17). The first sinner's error is the argument that humans do not have free will, that everything is determined in advance by God (or Fate). The second sinner's error is the argument that God does not pay attention to humanity's actions, because humanity is so insignificant and God is so powerful. These arguments are false, says Ben Sira; the truth is that each person is responsible for their own deeds and receives appropriate treatment from God.

Ben Sira therefore, like Ezekiel, counsels repentance. Numerous works of the last centuries of the Second Temple period feature the efficacy and importance of repentance. Perhaps the most beautiful expression of this piety is the *Prayer of Manasseh*, which reads in part:

> You, O Lord, according to your gentle grace, promised forgiveness to those who repent of their sins, and in your manifold mercies appointed repentance for sinners as the (way to) salvation. You, therefore, O Lord, God of the righteous, did not appoint grace for the righteous, . . . but you appointed grace for me, (I) who am a sinner. . . . And now, behold, I am bending the knees of my heart before you, and I am beseeching your kindness. I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned . . . ; forgive me, O Lord, forgive me! (7–8, 11–13, idiomatic trans. by J. H. Charlesworth)

John the Baptist, Jesus, and (we may assume) other popular preachers of the first century also encouraged the Jews to repent of their sins. Rabbinic piety lays great store in the efficacy of repentance for the removal of sin and the restoration of favorable relations between God and the individual Jew. Medieval casuists, both Jewish and Christian, debated the finer points of this system: Is repentance efficacious for all sins? How does one repent? How much repentance is enough? And so on.[48]

48. Medieval casuists: John T. McNeill and Helena Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938; repr., 1990); Ivan G. Marcus,

Not only does humanity have free will according to this system; God does as well. When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, he is not uttering an inescapable fate that will inevitably overtake his audience. This is the task of Greek oracles and modern-day weather forecasters. When the Israelite prophets announced doom to the Israelites, their goal was to stir the people to repentance in the hope that the doom could be averted. Prophets are watchmen who, upon the approach of danger, sound the trumpet to warn the people so that they may escape (Ezek. 33). This is the basic lesson of the book of Jonah (in all likelihood a product of the Persian or early Hellenistic period). In the name of the Lord, Jonah declared, "Forty days more and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (3:4). Forty days later Nineveh was *not* overthrown, not because Jonah was a false prophet but because the Ninevites had repented and God therefore could "repent" of his intention to destroy the city. The prophets spoke, as usual, on a national scale, but the lesson was true for the individual as well.

Thus humanity has free will to act, and God has free will to reward and punish. Some Jews were content with this system. Josephus says that the Sadducees "do away with the (power of) Fate altogether. . . . They maintain that man has the free choice of good or evil, and that it rests with each man's will whether he follows the one or the other."[49] Since the Sadducees denied the immortality of the soul, resurrection of the dead, and rewards in the hereafter, they probably believed (as Ezekiel did) that God punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous in this world.

But does humanity really have absolute free will? In many contexts, the Hebrew Bible does not extend free will to kings and nations. The descendants of Abram will be slaves in Egypt for four hundred years, not because of any sin but because God willed it so (Gen. 15). God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that the exodus from Egypt would be a wondrous display of miracles and power. The Babylonian captivity will last seventy years (Jer. 25:12; 29:10). And so on. In this conception, sinfulness and righteousness are irrelevant, and so are recidivism and repentance, since human destiny has been determined by God. This mode of thinking had a tremendous impact on the apocalyptic literature of the Second Temple. Daniel (2; 7–8) sees history unfolding as a sequence of four empires; other visionaries describe a greater or lesser number or describe a series of ages instead. But they all agree that the structure of human history was determined in advance by God, perhaps even at the creation. National repentance, which introduces an element of conditionality, has no role in this literature.

Piety and Society: The Jewish Pietists of Medieval Germany (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981).

49. Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.8.14 §§164–65.

Many Jews of the Second Temple period thought that the actions of individuals, no less than those of nations, were (to some extent at least) predetermined by God. These Jews were influenced by the belief in astrology, which swept the entire Hellenistic world in the third century BCE, or were disturbed by the idea that God could so distance himself from the world as to allow humans the freedom to do whatever they pleased. According to Josephus, the Essenes, in contrast to the Sadducees, declared, "Fate is mistress of all things, and nothing befalls men unless it be in accordance with her decree." Yet the Pharisees said, "Certain events are the work of Fate, but not all; as to other events, it depends upon ourselves whether they shall take place or not." Josephus's use of the term "Fate" (in Greek, *Heimarmenē*) probably reflects this idea of predeterminism. The Essenes claimed that all human actions are determined by Fate, while the Pharisees claimed that life is governed jointly by Fate and free will. The Qumran scrolls—many of which, in all likelihood, are documents of the Essenes (see chap. 5)—confirm how these pietists believed that God created two types of people, those who were destined to become the sons of light and the supporters of truth, and those who were destined to become sons of darkness and the supporters of wickedness. A new member was accepted when the group determined that it was his "lot" to join the righteous remnant of Israel. But the Essenes' confidence in their status as the predetermined elect was not so strong as to eliminate the need for piety, good deeds, and repentance. In the Qumran hymns (*Hodayot*), confidence born of predeterminism is absent. They are dominated instead by the sense of gratitude that the penitent feels toward God, because God has chosen him, though unworthy and sinful, to be his servant. The rabbis were well aware of the paradox of combining human free will with divine predeterminism. In the words of Rabbi Aqiva's pithy maxim, "Everything is foreseen [by God], but free will is granted [to humans]." Clearly the Pharisees and the Essenes of Qumran did not agree on the extent to which predestination controlled human events, but they agreed in principle that human events are the product of free will and determinism.[50]

But if God is partly responsible for human actions, is he not responsible for the evil that humans perform? If he is, how can humanity be held accountable for its actions? If he is not, whence humanity's inclination to sin? Josephus implies that such questions impelled the Sadducees to deny that God has any share in determining human actions: "They remove God beyond not merely the commission but [also] the very sight of evil." The more common way to

50. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 13.5.9 §§172–73. Qumran: see David Flusser, "Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 28–35. Rabbinic paradox: *m. Avot* 3:15.

answer these questions was to posit some force that, while created by God, nevertheless was separate enough from God to explain human sinfulness. This force was Satan (or his equivalent) and the evil hosts under his command (see above). In some of the Qumran texts, the cosmic struggle between the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Perversity is mirrored in a struggle within each person. The rabbinic version of this idea is that humans were created with two inclinations, the good and the wicked, and that life is a continuous struggle of the good inclination against the wicked. The wicked inclination is always suggesting various ways to sin, which a person must resist. Some texts connect the origins of sin with the fall of Adam and Eve.[51]

In much of the literature, then, there is the recognition not only that "there is no one who does not sin" (1 Kgs. 8:46) but also that an intrinsic part of being human is to be sinful. Why God created humanity in this way was a mystery, although the end would bring a new creation in which sin would have no place (see below). These conceptions had different consequences in Christianity and rabbinic Judaism. For the former, the power of sin can be overcome only through faith in Christ. Without the intercession of Jesus, humans are incapable of "salvation" (the forgiveness of sin). In contrast, rabbinic Judaism recognizes the power of sin yet believes that even without any intercessory figure, humanity is capable of finding favor in God's eyes. The means to this end are repentance, prayer, Torah study, and good deeds.

Redemption

The third paragraph of the Shema ends with the declaration that God redeemed the Israelites from Egypt: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God" (Num. 15:41). The Mishnah therefore calls this paragraph "the exodus from Egypt" and sees redemption as its theme. Just as God once redeemed his people from the oppression of Egypt, so too would he redeem them again. In the previous section ("Reward and Punishment"), I discussed theodicy as far as it applied to the individual, and I focused on the notions of resurrection, immortality, and repentance. Much of that discussion is relevant here, although the theme of this section is theodicy as far as it applies to the nation. The distinction between nation and individual is useful because it separates the constituent elements of Jewish eschatology, but it must not be overdrawn since the Jews of antiquity were not always sensitive to it. Many of the most personal prayers are couched in the first-person plural in the rabbinic prayer book. The notion of individual responsibility is

51. Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.8.14 §164. Qumran: *Manual of Discipline* 3–4. Rabbinic two inclinations: *b. Berakhot* 61a; *Qiddushin* 30b.

always joined with corporate responsibility. As if to underscore this point, the first paragraph of the Shema gives requirements in the second-person singular ("you [sg.] shall"), the second and third paragraphs in the plural (" you [pl.]").

The basic problem that had to be answered was the same as that discussed above. Why evil? Why has God given dominion to the gentile nations? Even if it be conceded that the Jews are sinful and that God is using the nations of the world as the staff of his anger to punish them, why must the punishment last so long? Why must it be so severe? When will it end? And most distressing of all, aren't the nations also sinful, even more sinful than the Jews, who are the bearers of the holy Torah? Why doesn't God punish them too? These questions are heard in one form or another throughout our period in the wake of the events of 587 BCE (the destruction of the First Temple), 167 BCE (the persecution of Judaism and profanation of the temple by Epiphanes), 63 BCE (the Roman conquest of Jerusalem), 70 CE (the destruction of the Second Temple), and 135 CE (the fall of Bar Kokhba). The Psalter is filled with "national laments" that are obsessed with these questions (although the dating of these psalms is usually uncertain). Here, for example, are excerpts from Psalm 79, ascribed by many scholars to the Maccabean period:

> O God, the nations have come into your inheritance;
> they have defiled your holy temple;
> they have laid Jerusalem in ruins…
> We have become a taunt to our neighbors,
> mocked and derided by those around us.
> How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever?
> Will your jealous wrath burn like fire?
> Pour out your anger on the nations
> that do not know you,
> and on the kingdoms
> that do not call on your name…
> Why should the nations say,
> "Where is their God?" …
> Return sevenfold into the bosom of our neighbors
> the taunts with which they taunted you, O Lord!
> (Ps. 79:1, 4–6, 10, 12)

Much external evidence confirms the psalmist's lament that the Jews have become a mockery among the nations. Anti-Jewish writers like Cicero, Apion, and Tacitus used the political subjugation of the Jews to prove that Judaism is a worthless religion, and this argument was developed even further in Christian anti-Jewish polemic.[52] Just as the righteous had to endure the taunts of the wicked, so Israel had to endure the taunts of the nations.

52. Cicero no. 68, Apion no. 174, and Tacitus no. 281, in Menahem Stern, *Greek*

For some Jews, however, the injustice of the status quo was caused not only or not chiefly by the gentiles but by their fellow Jews. As I shall discuss more fully in chapter 5, one of the hallmarks of "sectarian" ideology is exclusivity: only the members of the group are righteous in God's eyes, and only they properly understand God's will. In the present, wicked Jews control the temple and all the other apparatus of state and religion, and the members of the sect must suffer abuse and harassment. In this conception, the polarity of Jew versus gentile is accompanied, if not replaced, by the polarity of the righteous (the sect) versus the wicked (all the other Jews and apparently the gentiles as well). Sects suffer from both persecution and a persecution complex, which uses the sufferings of the present to prove loyalty to God. Alienated from the rest of society, they imagine an ideal world that in the end time would be realized on earth and vindicate them in the eyes of their opponents. The classic exponents of this perspective from later Second Temple times are the Jews of Qumran and the early Christians.

The distinction between national and sectarian salvation is not always clear, however. One of the major problems posed by the numerous eschatological descriptions from Second Temple times is their social setting. Is the visionary speaking for a specific group or for the nation as a whole? Usually the texts, with their vague references to the righteous and the wicked, do not provide enough data to answer this question. To simplify matters, in the following discussion I use the terms "nation," "Jews," and "the righteous" as synonyms, even if some of the original texts might distinguish among them.

The present, then, is a time of trial in which God's righteous are persecuted. Why God allows this situation to persist is the eternal question of the existence of evil, to which the Jews gave varied answers, as I discussed above. But even if they could not satisfactorily explain the present, they knew that justice would be established in the future. The righteous dead would be resurrected to glory (or otherwise rewarded), and the nation of Israel would be restored to the state of preeminence that it deserves.

The prophets already spoke of "the day of the LORD" and of "the end of days," but these prophecies did not address the questions that bothered the Jews of the Second Temple period. The prophets assured their contemporaries that, after undergoing the punishments threatened by God, they would see much better times. In the future the world will be at peace, lions shall lie down with lambs, and men shall beat their swords into plowshares. A shoot shall come forth from the stump of Jesse and shall rule righteously (Isa. 2; 11). These beautiful images contributed mightily to the conceptions that

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and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974–80). See Stern's note on no. 68.

developed subsequently, but they are not motivated by a desire to explain the triumph of evil and the abuse of Israel at the hands of the gentiles. Also, for the prophets the "end of days" is simply a day in the future; it is neither the "end" of history nor the inauguration of a new order. The later literature—with its portrayal of cosmic battles between the forces of good and the forces of wickedness, its emphasis on the otherworldly nature of the end time, and its developed angelology and wealth of detail—has an entirely different atmosphere from its prophetic antecedents. In addition, the literary form of much of these later works differs in many important respects from that of classical prophecy, a point to which I shall return in chapter 6.

What exactly would transpire in the end time (at the "last," the *eschaton*, hence the term "eschatology," doctrine of the end time) was the subject of intense and varied speculations. According to the book of Daniel, the troubles inflicted on the Jews by Epiphanes would be resolved by a battle between Epiphanes and the Ptolemaic king of Egypt. After the battle, "Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish. . . . But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book" (Dan. 12:1). These events will be followed by the resurrection. That the events of the end time will be preceded by a great battle was a widespread belief, although who exactly was supposed to fight whom was never clear. In Daniel, one gentile king assaults another; neither the Jews nor the angelic hosts have any role in the battle (Michael's task is to protect his people, the Jews). Much more frequent is the depiction of a battle between Jews and gentiles, in which the former are led by a messiah, an "anointed" king. In the Qumran *War Scroll*, however, the final battle is not so much between humans as between the supernatural forces of Good (the sons of light) and Evil (the sons of darkness). This speculation is a development of Ezekiel's description of the attack of "Gog" against the people of Israel (Ezek. 38–39). Ezekiel was describing the attack of a human king, but the text readily lent itself to a cosmic interpretation (cf. Rev. 20:7–10). At this final battle, according to Ezekiel, the Israelites are merely spectators to the display of God's might: God destroys the enemy. The Israelites do nothing except clear the battlefield and bury the corpses.

Perhaps because it has neither a final battle involving the righteous nor a judgment scene, Daniel 12 does not mention a messiah. Similarly, the Qumran *War Scroll*, which imagines most or all of the fighting as accomplished by supernatural (nonhuman) forces, also has no need for a messianic figure. Many other texts, however, attribute to a messiah (or to an equivalent figure with a different title; cf. the "son of man" in Dan. 7) the task of destroying the forces of evil, either in battle or in judgment. The messiah can be either a general or a judge or both. He serves as God's agent to punish the wicked

and reward the righteous. The messiah is a human who has been "anointed" by God in order to implement his will in the end time. Some Qumran texts refer to two messiahs—a priestly messiah from the tribe of Levi and a royal messiah from the tribe of Judah, or the messiah of Aaron and the messiah of Israel—but their separate functions are not described. In the vast majority of these accounts, the messiah is definitely a human figure. Two Jewish texts of the first century CE (or are these Christian interpolations?), however, describe "the Chosen One" as a being who existed before the creation of the world, who sits on his glorious throne in heaven, and who shall judge both mortals and "spirits" in the end time.[53]

Daniel also omits (or takes for granted) many other elements that were standard features in the eschatological speculations of his contemporaries and successors: the renewal of Jerusalem (perhaps through the replacement of the earthly city with the heavenly Jerusalem), the ingathering of the exiles, the reestablishment of the Davidic kingship, the gentiles' veneration of God (presumably the gentiles not killed in the final war), and the renewed creation of the cosmos. These ideas, too, were developed in a bewildering variety of ways.

This complex of beliefs rests on assumptions both stated and unstated. Justice must triumph because the God of history is the God of justice. God has a covenant with his people, and the covenant must be fulfilled. God also has covenants with the Davidic house and the Aaronide line that cannot be abrogated. The future chastisement of the nations, the glorification of Israel, and the triumph of peace were all predicted by the prophets, and those prophecies must be fulfilled. God controls human events and in advance has determined the exact stages of history: the triumph of the wicked empires and of the powers of sin, the crisis of the end, and its resolution. This process is not affected by repentance since its course is inevitable. Just as God redeemed his people in the past from disasters (from Pharaoh, from the Babylonian captivity), surely he will come to their aid yet again, since their current situation is at least as difficult, if not worse, than those from which they were rescued previously. The end time is not merely some undetermined day in the future, as the prophets had said, but is the end of history itself, the end of normal existence. It is a new creation in which evil has no place.

The impact of these ideas on the behavior of the Jews varied. Just as a firm belief in immortality and resurrection does not necessarily make one eager to die, so too a firm belief in the messiah and redemption does not necessarily make one eager to see the eschaton. As if to emphasize this point, many works highlight the troubles and disasters that will presage the arrival of the end (cf. Amos 5:18–20). In addition, since the end time is predetermined, nothing that

53. See *1 Enoch* 45–57; *4 Ezra* 14.

the Jews say or do could affect the time of its coming. This perspective was emphasized in rabbinic piety. A redeemer will come to Israel, but the time of his coming cannot be hastened by human action. After the disastrous defeats in 70 CE, 115–117, and 132–135, this was sound advice indeed. But many Jews, especially in the first century CE, felt that they were living on the edge of history and expectantly awaited the promised deliverance. Usually this was understood to mean deliverance from the Romans, a mentality that is evident clearly in the Gospels and less clearly in Josephus's portrayal of the revolutionary factions of the war of 66–70 CE. In any case, the extant apocalyptic literature, even the literature that ascribes an active role to the righteous in the final battle, is not the work of political revolutionaries. At the Red Sea, Moses told the Israelites, "The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to keep still" (Exod. 14:14). The apocalyptic visionaries told the Jews that the Lord would fight for them yet again.

Some Jews, however, understood the deliverance as a more personal and spiritual experience. For them, the "kingdom of heaven" was to be realized by individual transformation on earth. Such Jews were to be found in the early Christian community and, a millennium later, among the Jewish mystics of the Middle Ages. Once again we see the connection between the salvation of the individual and the salvation of the group.

CONCLUSION

In the Judaism of the Second Temple and rabbinic periods, the major development is the democratization of religion. Of course, preexilic piety often focused on the individual Israelite, and Second Temple piety often focused on the community as a whole, but the shift in emphasis remains. The central institution of worship in the preexilic period was the temple, and the central feature of the cult was the sacrifice of animals. The individual Israelite had little role, since the priests, the only ones allowed to enter the sacrificial area, officiated on behalf of the people of Israel. During the Second Temple period, the temple was supplemented by the synagogue, a lay institution; the sacrificial cult was supplemented by prayer, a cultic practice open to all; and the priest was supplemented by the scribe, the learned teacher.

During the preexilic period, the prophets denounced the people for their sins and proclaimed that catastrophe was unavoidable unless the nation as a whole returned to God and repented of its evil ways. But beginning in the sixth century BCE, the doctrine of sin, retribution, and repentance was individualized. It no longer referred only to the people as a whole; it also, and perhaps primarily, referred to the individual citizen. Jeremiah and Ezekiel,

representatives of the new conception, argue that the sins of the fathers are *not* visited on the children. Righteous individuals will be saved even if the nation as a whole is guilty. These ideas intensified during the Second Temple period. Repentance became a virtue to be practiced by every Jew; the Day of Atonement became a day of repentance for all Jews, not just a day for the high priest to cleanse the shrine of its accumulated pollutions (Exod. 30:10; Lev. 16). The blessings of the end time were now thought to include not merely peace and prosperity for the nation but also reward for the righteous individuals of Israel, including the ultimate reward: resurrection.

The democratization of religion had as its goal the sanctification of daily life. Every act and every moment was to be in the service of God. The new regimen of study, prayer, ritual, and ethics was incumbent not upon some priestly or monastic elite but upon the entire community. All (male) Jews were equally obligated.

Theological developments are no less dramatic but much less focused. One of the major issues throughout the Second Temple period was theodicy, and the question was approached in two different ways. The first tried to reassure the faithful that justice would triumph in the future; the second tried to explain why justice was not triumphant in the present. The first answer consisted of new eschatological doctrines. Reward and punishment are meted out after death. Righteous individuals are resurrected to eternal life (and wicked individuals are resurrected to eternal punishment). The nation of Israel (or a group of the righteous within the nation) also will receive its due in the future. This future time—which would be inaugurated by the appearance either of God and his heavenly agents, or of some specially designated mortal (the "messiah"), or both—was generally conceived as a new creation in which the natural order would markedly differ from that now in effect. The second answer consisted of new theological speculations. Fallen angels, Satan, and other malevolent supernatural forces have corrupted God's creation and are responsible for humanity's inclination to sin and the apparent ascendancy of evil.

Although theology figures prominently in the literature that is extant from the period between the Maccabees and the Mishnah, Judaism was defined more by its practices than its beliefs. Probably all those who were known as Jews and who called themselves Jews believed in the one God who created the world, chose the Jews to be the bearer of his message, revealed his will to Moses (and the prophets), and controls the events of the world in general and of the Jews in particular. But all of these theological tenets were susceptible to diverse interpretations, and no one in antiquity thought to promote any single interpretation or set of interpretations as exclusively correct. In other words, no Jew of antiquity gave a creedal definition of Judaism.

When discussing the nature of God, Jewish thinkers in antiquity defended a series of conflicting truths (the technical term for which would be "antinomies") that they did not even try to resolve: God was the Lord of the entire universe yet also the national God of the Jews (universalism versus particularism). God was One and Unique yet also served by myriads of angels and opposed by an impressive array of powers (monotheism versus polytheism). God was in the world, abiding among his people yet was also the Lord of the cosmos, enthroned in the distant heavens (immanence versus transcendence). God was the eternal, immutable, immovable prime mover of the universe yet also capable of anger, pity, and other human qualities (the God of the philosophers versus the God of the Bible). The discussions of theodicy sometimes centered on another set of conflicting truths: God allows humans absolute free will to do as they please, yet God also controls human events in accordance with his desire (free will versus predetermination). To us moderns, these pairs appear to be mutually exclusive, but to the Jews of antiquity, they were simultaneously true. Some texts emphasize one aspect of God rather than another, but the fundamental tensions are never resolved.

4

The Community and Its Institutions

Except for the brief interval of Maccabean success, the Jews of antiquity (after 587 BCE) never enjoyed political independence. They depended on the sufferance of their conquerors. And although they lived under a wide variety of empires, as a rule they were treated well by their rulers. They were granted religious freedom and political autonomy. Not only were they allowed to observe their ancestral religion; they also were allowed to form political bodies that controlled (or attempted to control) the internal affairs of the Jewish community. These political organizations were the public institutions of communal life (the temple, the Sanhedrin, *politeumata*; see below). They were supplemented by a wide variety of private organizations that, at least at the local level, were probably the real center of communal life (sects, schools, and associations). Straddling the boundary between public and private were synagogues. I shall discuss each of these in turn.

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL

As a province in an empire, the land of Israel (called *Yehud* in Persian times, Coele Syria in Hellenistic times, Judea (also spelled Judaea) in early Roman times, and *Palaestina* (or Palestine) after the defeat of Bar Kokhba) was governed like any other province. It had governors and administrators, tax collectors and generals, cities and villages. But the Jews of the country, who were a substantial part of the population, constituted a "nation" or "religious community" that was recognized by the state and allowed to have its own institutions and jurisdiction. As a result, throughout the Second Temple and rabbinic periods, the Jews of the country were citizens of two parallel

political systems. The first was the "civil" administration of the state, which was implemented on the local level by cities and villages and on the provincial level first by vassal kings (e.g., Herod the Great and Herod Antipas) and then by governors (e.g., the procurators/prefects of the first century CE). The second was the "national" or "religious" administration of the Jewish polity, which, for most of the Second Temple period, was led by the high priest. In some matters the two systems overlapped, creating a degree of confusion and uncertainty (see, e.g., the Gospel accounts of the trial and execution of Jesus).

When the Jews returned to Judea in the sixth century BCE, the Persians established a dyarchy, a division of power between a governor, who was at first chosen from the old royal family (Zerubbabel, of the Davidic line), and a high priest (Joshua son of Johozadak). The elevation of the high priest to a position of prominence was an innovation: previously he had not been a powerful figure. During the period of the First Temple, he served at the pleasure of the king and only seldom emerged from obscurity to become an independent figure (notably 2 Kgs. 11). By the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (mid-fifth century BCE), the royal family had disappeared, and the high priest was emerging as the leading political figure. Ezra was neither governor nor high priest; he enacted his reforms on the basis of the authority granted him by the Persian king as special minister for the Jews of Judea (Ezra 7). Nehemiah was governor of the province and enforced his reforms by the civil authority of the state. But both Ezra and Nehemiah recognized that the high priesthood was the major source of opposition to their program.

By the fourth century BCE at the latest, the high priest was the uncontested head of the Jews, not merely the head of the temple. In Hellenistic times, the office was filled by an appointee of the king. He was responsible for the collection of taxes. "Civil" and "religious" power were combined in one person. The wars of the Maccabees in large measure revolved around this office. The high priests installed by Antiochus Epiphanes initiated the radical hellenization, looted the temple, and may even have supported the persecution. To cement their victory, the Maccabees had the Jews elect them as the new high-priestly family. With the Roman conquest in 63 BCE, civil power was vested in the Romans and their agents, and only limited authority was left to the high priests. When the great rebellion of 66–70 CE broke out, the revolutionaries vented their anger as much, if not more, against the high priests as against the Romans. They appointed a new high priest to take the place of the one appointed by their enemies. Thus, by converting the high priesthood into a powerful office, the Persians shaped the politics of the entire Second Temple period.

The two major institutions controlled by the high priest were the temple and the Sanhedrin. Let us examine each of these briefly.

The Temple

As the focal point of the religion, the temple was the central communal institution not just for the Jews of the land of Israel but also for those of the Diaspora. The annual half-shekel contribution and the festival pilgrimages bound together the entire Jewish community of both the land of Israel and the Diaspora (see chap. 1). The ideology of the temple also served as a binding force: it represented oneness and exclusivity. Only one place was suitable for God's home on earth, and that place was the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. During the Second Temple period, at least three other temples were erected, but none of them competed effectively with the temple of Jerusalem. The first was the temple built by the Jews of Elephantine (in upper Egypt) in the sixth century BCE, which was completely forgotten by later Jewish tradition and is known only through an archive discovered in Egypt at the end of the nineteenth century. The second was the temple of the Samaritans, erected on Mount Gerizim about the time of Alexander the Great. This temple, which became the focal point of the Samaritan schism (see chap. 5), was later destroyed by John Hyrcanus. The third was the temple built in Leontopolis (in the district of Heliopolis) in Egypt by Onias, a scion of the high-priestly family who fled Jerusalem during the Antiochan persecution. Whatever Onias's intention, this temple did not gain the support or recognition of the Jews of Egypt; Philo does not even mention it. Diaspora Jews respected the exclusive claims advanced by the temple of Jerusalem. It represented the unity of God and the unity of Israel. "One temple for the one God," explains Josephus.[1]

The temple not only unified Jewish society; it also was the power base of the (or a) ruling class. As the exclusive ministers of God in the temple, the priests enjoyed power and prestige. Josephus, a priest himself, emphasizes that the priests carefully guarded their pedigree and were expert custodians of the sacred Scriptures. In Josephus's view, the ideal constitution for the Jews is a *theocracy*, rule by God over his people, which translates into rule by God's representatives, the priests. Josephus is not alone in this adulatory attitude. The Jews of Qumran created a hieratic society controlled in large part by "the priests the sons of Zadok." Many texts speak of a priestly messiah who will come at the end of days. Even after the Roman conquest in 63 BCE, the consequent loss of most of its civil jurisdiction, and the elevation of social nobodies to the office by Herod and the Romans, the high priesthood still enjoyed prestige and power through the first century of our era. After the destruction of the temple, the priests continued to assert their privileged status within Jewish society, thereby competing with the rabbis for authority.[2]

1. Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.23 §193.
2. Priests guard their pedigree and the sacred Scriptures: Josephus, *Against Apion*

The priesthood consisted of high priests (the term includes the men who officiated as high priests in the temple as well as the families from which they were chosen) and simple priests, a division that resembles that between the upper and lower clergy in prerevolutionary France. All priests claimed descent from Aaron, the brother of Moses, but the lineage of the high priests was superior to that of the simple priests. The high-priestly families and the lay families with whom they intermarried were the real aristocracy of late Second Temple times. The social turmoil that preceded the outbreak of the war in 66 CE shows that the tension between the simple priests and the high priests was as great as that between the lay masses and the high priests. All priests were entitled to receive tithes and officiate in the temple, but only the high priests enjoyed the full measure of power that such a position could bestow.

The high priest and the priestly establishment were in charge of the temple and its cult, but their power was not unchallenged. The Jewish vassal kings (like Herod the Great) and the Roman governors of the country during the first century CE kept a careful watch on the temple to ensure that it would not become the focal point of unrest. The great rebellion of 66–70 CE began in the temple, and the temple remained the center of revolutionary activity until its destruction in 70. Many sects dreamed of purifying the temple and controlling it (cf. Mark 11:15–19). Rabbinic texts claim that the high priests, who belonged to the Sadducean group, had to obey the legal rulings of the rabbinic sages. (I shall return to this theme in my discussion of sectarianism in chap. 5.) The temple was a source of both power and power struggles within Jewish society. It was also a (perhaps the) focal point of sectarian discord, as we shall see.

The Sanhedrin

One of the most elusive institutions of the Second Temple period is the *Sanhedrin* (a Hebrew word from the Greek, meaning literally "a sitting together," "session" or "assembly"). According to the Gospels and Acts, the Sanhedrin was a supreme court chaired by the high priest and composed of members drawn from various groups (Sadducees, Pharisees, priests). It had authority to try cases that involved serious violations of religious law (e.g., if someone claimed to be king of the Jews or if someone brought a gentile into the temple precincts). According to rabbinic tradition, however, the Sanhedrin

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1.7 §§30–38. Theocracy: Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.16 §165. Priestly messiah: see the passages listed by Géza Vermès, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, new ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 86. Priestly assertions of power after the destruction of the temple: *m. Sheqalim* 1:4, *Ketubbot* 1:5, *Rosh HaShanah* 1:7, *Eduyyot* 8:2.

was a legislative as well as a judicial body, chaired by a pair of rabbinic sages and composed entirely of members of the rabbinic elite. Josephus's incidental references to the Sanhedrin show it to have been not a permanent body but an ad hoc committee assembled by the high priest whenever he needed advice on difficult cases.[3] (Josephus knows a permanent council in Jerusalem that he calls by its proper Greek name, *boulē*.) For centuries, scholars have been trying to sort out these conflicting testimonies about the body that is said to have played such an important role in the life and death of Jesus.

All sources agree, however, that the Romans allowed the Jewish community a good deal of autonomy in their internal affairs. Josephus and the New Testament agree that the high priest was the chair of the Jewish polity and that the Sanhedrin served him, and this claim is probably correct. With the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, the Jerusalem Sanhedrin disappeared, and the Jewish community was left without a central organization. This was the lacuna that the rabbis gradually filled. Instead of the high priest, the head of the autonomous community of Jews in the land of Israel was now the *patriarch*, and instead of a priestly Sanhedrin, the supreme judicial and legislative body was now a council of rabbis (often called, as before, the Sanhedrin). It was not until the last part of the second century that the Romans recognized this state of affairs. By the year 300 CE or so, the patriarch was claiming authority over all the Jews of the Roman Empire, just as the temple once claimed the allegiance of all Jews everywhere. (I shall return to these developments in chapter 7.) The rabbinic version of the pre-70 Sanhedrin is probably the result of projecting the conditions of rabbinic times backward into the Second Temple period.

THE PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF THE DIASPORA

The Jews of the land of Israel were subject both to their own internal government and to the government of the state. In similar fashion, the larger communities of the Diaspora in Hellenistic and Roman times were governed by two different political structures. First, like everyone else, they were subject to the local municipal and provincial administrations. Second, they were members of their own ethnic communities, which enjoyed a good measure of internal autonomy. An autonomous ethnic community in a Greek city was known as a *politeuma* (pl. *politeumata*). Other ethnic groups had their own *politeumata*, but because of the troubles between the Jews and the "Greeks"

3. *Jewish Antiquities* 20.200–202.

in Alexandria in 38–41 CE, we are best informed about the Jewish *politeuma* of that city.

The Jewish *politeuma* of Alexandria was led by a board of directors, one of whom was the chief of the community. It had its own archives and courts. The numerous synagogues of the city belonged to the Jewish community and were extensions of the central organization. All the Jews of the city were citizens of the community. They also regarded themselves as "Alexandrians," a term that could mean either citizens or residents of the city of Alexandria. The clarification of this rather technical and seemingly insignificant ambiguity provoked a series of violent incidents. The Alexandrians resented the Jewish *politeuma* because it was a body that was in but not of the city. It was legally separate from the city and therefore a diminution of the city's own autonomy and self-esteem. The Alexandrians therefore wanted the Jewish *politeuma* to be dissolved. The Jews, by contrast, wanted the city government to recognize all the members of their community as citizens of the city of Alexandria. Municipal citizenship was a privileged status that conferred material benefits (including lower taxes and lighter punishments for crimes) in addition to prestige. Apion, the leader of the anti-Jewish party, countered that if the Jews wished to be citizens of Alexandria, they should worship the gods of the Alexandrians (see chap. 2). The Jews countered that they had been regarded as "Alexandrians" ever since the days of Alexander the Great himself. And the battle was joined. Exactly who or what started the battle is no clearer to us than it was to the emperor Claudius who, after four years of riots and bloodshed, told the Jews and the Alexandrians to stop causing unrest and to live with each other in peace. Similar struggles took place in Caesarea (in Judea), Antioch (in Syria), and the cities of Ionia (in modern-day western Turkey) during the first century, and their recurrence probably caused the conflagration that all but destroyed the Jewry of Egypt, Cyrene, and Cyprus in 115–117 CE.

Three Greek inscriptions from Berenice (modern-day Benghazi, Libya) give a vivid glimpse of the life of a Jewish community during settled times.[4] The first inscription, dated to 8–6 BCE, is a resolution passed by the *politeuma* and its seven directors in honor of one Decimus Valerius Dionysius, apparently a Jew with a Greco-Latin name, who plastered and adorned the community's "amphitheater." The community therefore resolved to erect the inscription in the amphitheater in his honor, to free him from various communal obligations, and to crown him publicly at every assembly and at every new moon. The second inscription, dated to 24/25 CE, records a resolution of the

4. Gert Lüderitz, *Corpus jüdischer Zeugnisse aus der Kyrenaika* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1983), nos. 70–72. The discussion in Shimon Applebaum, *Jews and Greeks in Ancient Cyrene* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), 160–67, is very inaccurate.

politeuma and its nine directors, voted at the Festival of Tabernacles, to honor a Roman official who had been sent to the district and who showed great courtesy to both the Jews and the Greeks. He too was to receive an inscription in the amphitheater and was to be praised publicly at every assembly and at every new moon. The third inscription, dated to 56 CE, is a resolution of the community (here called not *politeuma* but *synagōgē*) commemorating monetary donations made by nine directors, one priest, and eight private individuals for the repair of the synagogue.

These inscriptions show that the Jews of Berenice were organized as one large community (called *politeuma* in the first two inscriptions and *synagōgē* in the third) headed by seven or nine directors. It is evidence that the community owned a building, called an "amphitheater" in the first two inscriptions and a "synagogue" in the third (on the meaning of the word "synagogue," see below). Also, the community met at regular intervals (at the new moon and apparently on Jewish holidays). The very organization that protected the legal rights and cultural distinctiveness of the Jews of Berenice was thoroughly Greek in conception and form (it owned an "amphitheater," passed resolutions, erected honorary inscriptions, and awarded crowns).

Not all Jews, however, lived in communities that had a central organization. The Jews of the western part of the Roman Empire and of the towns and villages of the East did not form communities recognized by the state. Since there was no central communal organization, the synagogues of these localities were independent of each other. The Romans assured the Jews of the right to assemble publicly for worship wherever they lived throughout the empire, and each synagogue created under this right was considered by the Romans a "club" or "association" for religious purposes. Thus the Jews were always able to worship freely, but they were not always able to form a corporate body that would be recognized by the state as "the Jewish community" of a given place. In smaller settlements that had only one synagogue, the distinction between "central community" (*politeuma*) and "local community" (the synagogue) did not matter. But in larger settlements with many synagogues, the distinction was substantive. In the third and fourth centuries of our era, the Jews of Rome maintained at least eleven synagogues, but there is no indication that in the aggregate all the synagogues formed a single Jewish community. Each synagogue had its own name and board of officers. Perhaps the Jews of the city, for their own convenience, had some sort of board supervising all the synagogues and looking out for matters of general concern, but this board, if it existed at all, had no legal standing in the eyes of the state. This type of organization ensured freedom of religion no less than the *politeuma* did, but it did not provide much communal autonomy. In these localities, the synagogue was the essential unit of communal organization.

THE SYNAGOGUE

The synagogue is a tripartite institution: a place of prayer, a place of study, and a place of meeting. In all likelihood, each of these parts was once a separate institution, each with its own history, and only after a long and complicated process were the three combined. The best evidence for this process is nomenclature. The Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora, when referring to a specific place or building that had a communal function, generally used the rare Greek word *proseuchē* (pl. *proseuchai*), which literally means "prayer." They used the common Greek word *synagōgē* in its literal sense of "congregation" or "assembly." The Jews of the land of Israel, in contrast, generally avoided the term *proseuchē* and used the word *synagōgē* to refer to a place or building that had a communal purpose. Thus the Jews of the Diaspora for the most part had "places of prayer," while Jews of the land of Israel had "places of meeting." Philo remarks that the *proseuchai* resemble "schools" because their essential purpose is to teach the laws of Moses and the words of God.[5] The rabbis, too, often associate the *bet midrash* ("school" or "academy") with the *bet keneset* ("meetinghouse" or "synagogue"). The variety of these terms indicates that the fully formed synagogue was not the creation of a single person or even a single generation. How the three functions came to be combined is the subject of the following brief discussion. (For a discussion of daily prayer and Torah study, ideas that form the background to the emergence of the synagogue, see the previous chapter.)

The earliest extant references to a place of prayer are two nearly identical inscriptions from Upper Egypt dated to the reign of Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–221 BCE).[6] The first one reads, "For King Ptolemy and Queen Berenice, his sister and wife, and for their children, the Jews [have dedicated] the prayer[house] (*proseuchē*)." The second commemorates the dedication of another prayerhouse to the same king and queen by "the Jews of the city Crocodilopolis." The Jewish communities of these small towns obviously did not constitute formal communities (*politeumata*), but these inscriptions testify to some kind of communal organization. The prayerhouses were built by "the Jews" and dedicated to the reigning monarchs, a practice that is attested elsewhere in Egypt and Cyrenaica in the third and second centuries BCE. These

5. Philo, *Life of Moses* 2.39 §216 (*proseuktēria* instead of *proseuchai*); idem, *Embassy to Gaius* 23 §156.

6. David M. Lewis, "The Jewish Inscriptions of Egypt," nos. 1440 and 1532A, in *Corpus papyrorum judaicarum*, ed. Victor Tcherikover et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 3:141, 164 = William Horbury and David Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), nos. 22 and 117.

buildings are called *proseuchai*, strongly implying that their primary function was to serve as houses of prayer.

It is probably not a coincidence that the earliest Jewish "prayerhouses" are attested in the Diaspora. Far removed from the temple and its cult, Diaspora Jews needed an alternative means for regular communion with God. They did not want to build temples or offer sacrifices, so they created a new institution in which the community would gather for prayer. Many scholars believe that such an institution is the product of the sixth century BCE, when the Babylonian exiles sought a replacement for the temple that had been destroyed. Although the suggestion is plausible, it is unsupported by any evidence and seems to put the custom of daily (or regular) prayer much earlier than the evidence will allow. A more likely conjecture is that the prayerhouse is a product of the Hellenistic Diaspora, perhaps Egypt. In any case, the synagogue as *proseuchē* is first attested in Egypt in the third century BCE.

At least 200–250 years have to elapse before a synagogue is attested in the land of Israel. Most of the numerous literary works of the later Second Temple period virtually ignore the synagogue. Antiochus Epiphanes profaned the temple and persecuted the Jews, but no source accuses him of abusing synagogues, apparently because they did not yet exist in Judea (although some scholars contend that Ps. 74:8 refers to the destruction of synagogues by Epiphanes). The earliest attestations are all from the first century of our era. The Gospels, of course, refer to various synagogues in Galilee. Jerusalem had synagogues of freedmen, Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and Cilicians, according to Acts 6:9. In his narrative, Josephus refers to synagogues in several Judean cities. In Masada and Herodion (or Herodium), archaeologists have discovered meeting rooms that may have served as synagogues for the rebels who occupied these fortresses during the wars against the Romans. The town of Gamala in the Gaulan had a large assembly hall that seems to have functioned as a synagogue. The most important testimony, however, is the Theodotus Inscription, in Greek, from Jerusalem, and in all likelihood of the first century CE:[7]

> Theodotus, son of Vettenus, priest and archisynagogue, son of an archisynagogue, grandson of an archisynagogue, built the synagogue for the reading of the Law and the teaching of the commandments, and the guesthouse and the rooms and the water supplies as an inn for those who come from abroad; which [synagogue] his fathers had founded and the elders and Simonides.

7. Baruch Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives* (Paris: Gabalda, 1967), 70–71, no. 79; Lea Roth-Gerson, *The Greek Inscriptions from the Synagogues in Eretz-Israel* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1987; in Hebrew), no. 19.

Theodotus was a third-generation *archisynagogue*, the "ruler of the synagogue," an office that is mentioned in the New Testament (e.g., Mark 5:35–38; Acts 18:8, 17) and in numerous other inscriptions. Theodotus also calls himself a "priest," although neither his father nor his grandfather is so designated.

How do these synagogues compare with their Diaspora equivalents? Theodotus explains that his synagogue is to serve for "the reading of the Law and the teaching of the commandments." In the synagogues of Galilee, Jesus' primary activity is teaching, just as it is Paul's in the synagogues of Asia Minor. As I mentioned above, Philo emphasizes the didactic function of the synagogues. The study of Scripture, then, is an activity that the synagogues of Judea and the Diaspora have in common. Otherwise, however, they are very different. The Judean synagogues are not *proseuchai*, prayerhouses. Theodotus does not mention prayer in the description of his synagogue. Presumably both pilgrims and natives of Jerusalem would pray at or near the temple, but Jews of Judea who lived more than a day's journey from Jerusalem—where did they pray? Daily or even weekly prayer at the temple was as impractical for them as it was for their coreligionists in the Diaspora. Surely they prayed in their local synagogues, but it is striking that only one text, a passage in Josephus, refers to a *proseuchē* in the land of Israel, and that only one text (Matt. 6:5) explicitly locates regular prayer in synagogues (but perhaps Matthew means "gatherings" rather than "synagogues"). In the passage that uses the term *proseuchē*, Josephus describes how the people of Tiberias assembled in their prayerhouse on the Sabbath, but instead of praying they seem to spend their time having a town meeting about the war. Only at a special fast a few days later do the Tiberians turn to prayer (although that too is soon interrupted by political debate). Where did they pray? Perhaps in the city square, perhaps out in the fields (see again Matt. 6:5). There is no easy solution to this question.[8]

In those parts of the land of Israel that had substantial numbers of gentiles (e.g., the city of Caesarea), the local synagogue probably played the same role in communal organization that it did in the Diaspora. But in the Jewish areas, its role will have been very different. Tiberias was a Jewish city, and Josephus implies that the prayerhouse was a municipal building. Rabbinic legislation about the synagogue also assumes it to be a municipal structure. In Jerusalem, by contrast, there is no indication of any municipal synagogue. Here the synagogues were private affairs, just like clubs or associations. This is strongly implied by the names of the synagogues listed in Acts 6:9 and by the Theodotus Inscription. Whatever the identity of "the elders and Simonides," the inscription shows that the synagogue was virtually the private possession of the Theodotus/Vettenus family for more than three generations. In this

8. Josephus, *Life* 54 §§277, 280; 56 §293; describing the synagogue in Tiberias.

respect, the Theodotian synagogue is not unique. Some synagogues of the later centuries, to judge from their inscriptions, were the private foundations of their dedicators; they were open to the community, of course, but owned or at least run by a private party. Archaeology has revealed many synagogues that originally were private homes and later were converted to sacred use.

In sum: the synagogue is an amalgamation of a prayerhouse, which apparently originated in the Diaspora in early Hellenistic times; a study house or school, which apparently originated in Israel also in early Hellenistic times (see below); and a meetinghouse, which served the different needs of the Jewries of the Diaspora and the land of Israel. By the first century CE, these diverse elements had not yet united to form a single type. In fact, even by the end of late antiquity, the synagogue did not attain a single definition. Our sources from the third to the seventh centuries CE present radically different portraits of the synagogue. The rich archaeological evidence from both the land of Israel and the Diaspora documents a wide variety of synagogue types, and scholars no longer even try to trace a single line of development that will tie them all together. The synagogues revealed by the archaeologist, with their carvings, mosaics, and paintings, are not the sort of buildings that rabbinic evidence had led us to expect. I shall return briefly to these problems in chapter 7.

Two important historical conclusions follow from this reconstruction. First, many scholars and textbooks use the word "synagogue" as if the word described a single, consistent, and well-defined phenomenon. But in reality there were many kinds of synagogues, during both the Second Temple and rabbinic periods, with varying functions, architecture, religious rituals, and social settings. There was no United Synagogue of Antiquity that enforced standards on all the member congregations. The word "synagogue" covers a wide variety of phenomena, and a definition that fits one place and time may not be appropriate for another. Second, since the synagogue grew from diverse and complex origins, it is most unlikely that any single group or office controlled all the synagogues of antiquity. The synagogue was not a Pharisaic invention, and there is no reason to assume that all pre-70 synagogues, even in the land of Israel, were under Pharisaic control (in spite of Matt. 23:2 and 6). Perhaps after 70 the rabbis consolidated their power over some of the synagogues in the land of Israel, but since synagogues were in the hands of local communities, and sometimes in the hands of local individuals, the rabbis certainly did not have the means to establish rapid and effective control over all the synagogues of the Roman world. That was a long and slow process. Both of these points militate against the widely accepted belief that the Jewish-Christian split was finalized when the rabbis, in about 90–100 CE, incorporated into the synagogue liturgy a benediction (actually a malediction) against Jesus and the Christians. Even

if the rabbis did incorporate such an anti-Christian prayer, a point that is by no means clear, they would have had no way to ensure its acceptance in any synagogue outside of their direct control (see further chap. 7 and 8).

PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

The society of the preexilic period was organized by tribe. Each tribe was an agglomeration of clans, and each clan was an agglomeration of families. There were twelve tribes in all; a thirteenth, the tribe of Levi, was in charge of sacerdotal functions. With the exile of the northern kingdom in 722 BCE and the southern in 587 BCE, the tribal structure was destroyed beyond repair. When the Jews returned from Babylonia to Judea in the sixth century BCE, their reconstituted society consisted of clans (Ezra 2; Neh. 7), not tribes. The tribe of Levi now consisted of two clearly distinguished elements, priests and Levites, and the rest of the people were called simply Israelites (e.g., Ezra 10:25; the other subdivisions in the population need not be considered here). The memory of twelve tribes was still alive (Ezra 8:35), just as it would remain alive throughout the Second Temple and rabbinic periods, but the memory did not shape the new social order. Priestly and aristocratic clans played an important role throughout the Second Temple period, but in the population at large, by the Hellenistic period the clans had dissolved, or at least had lost their hold on their constituent families.

The breakdown of tribe into clan, and clan into family, mirrors the breakdown of the belief in corporate responsibility and the emergence of a doctrine of theodicy based on the individual. The eschatological speculations and the religious doctrines of the period treated the individual not merely as a member of a family, clan, or nation, but also as an independent being whose ultimate reward and punishment depended on their own deeds alone (see chap. 3). New organizations were created to give the individual a place within society commensurate with their new importance. The model for these new organizations was the association.

In Greco-Roman society, associations (guilds, clubs, *collegia* in Latin, *koina* in Greek) were extremely popular. They gave the individual both a secure refuge from the stresses of the world and a convenient place in which to find friendship and recognition. These associations were of many types: religious, economic, fraternal, and so on. Many groups were administered in accordance with written rules or laws, and practically all of the groups were led by various functionaries with high-sounding titles. The groups were run as if they were miniature cities (*poleis*), thus providing the membership a sense of power and control that usually eluded them in the real world.

Jewish society, too, had its share of private associations. As I discussed in the previous section, the synagogue, at least in the western Diaspora, was a private association for religious purposes. The word "synagogue" in non-Jewish Greek sometimes means "association," and even the title "archisynagogue" is attested in the sense of "head of the association." The synagogue was more than just a club, but its growth was certainly aided by the increased popularity of associations during the Hellenistic period. The synagogue was the most common form of Jewish association, but it was not the only one.

Sects

The Latin word *secta*, which gives us our English word "sect," means "mode of life," hence "school" or "school of thought." It is the equivalent of the Greek word *hairesis*, which in turn leads to our English word "heresy." In English usage "sect" and "heresy" often have negative valence: a sect is a "deviant" group, and a heresy is an "incorrect" doctrine or practice. In the next chapter I shall discuss "orthodoxy" and "heresy" in ancient Judaism and shall return to a fuller discussion of separatism, exclusiveness, and other concepts implied by the English words "sect" and "heresy." In this chapter, my concern is neither theological authenticity nor social popularity, but group structure. I use "sect" as a neutral term to designate various groups in ancient Judaism that were distinctive and coherent enough to receive special epithets from outsiders or to bestow special epithets upon themselves ("Essenes," "Christians," "Pharisees," et al.).

The clearest example of a sect is the group that lived at Qumran and is usually identified with the Essenes described by Philo and Josephus. The two major Qumran documents that outline the structure of the sect are the *Covenant of Damascus* (esp. the second half) and the *Rule of the Community* (also called the *Manual of Discipline*, esp. 5.1–6.23), but the two descriptions do not coincide exactly (and neither coincides with the eschatological descriptions of the community contained in other works). The *Covenant of Damascus* describes a group that lives in "camps" among other Jews. They marry, have children, own property and slaves, and must be wary of contact with both gentiles and Jewish nonsectarians. Their leader is the overseer (in Greek translation, the title would be *episkopos*, or "bishop"), who is assisted by a priest and a panel of ten judges. All members (apparently), both new and old, must take an oath of loyalty to the laws of Moses.

The *Rule of the Community*, by contrast, presupposes a different social setting and a much more rigorous separation from the world. The members live a communal life, with little or no contact with outsiders. They do not own property; all goods are surrendered to the group upon acceptance. Nor are they married.

Once again the overseer figures prominently in the leadership of the group, but "the priests the sons of Zadok" are even more prominent. The text also describes the "Session of the Many," a general assembly that discusses various matters, notably the admission of new members, and which is presided over by the overseer, the priests, the Levites, and the elders. Potential members undergo a probation process lasting three years, at the beginning of which they swear an oath of loyalty to the sect. After completing their catechism, if they are approved by the Session of the Many, they may join the sect and partake of its communal meals. Every year all members of the sect renew the covenant in a ceremony based on Deuteronomy 27–28. Thus while the organization envisioned by the *Damascus Covenant* resembles that of the *Rule of the Community* (emphasis on purity, separation from sinners, obedience to authority, oaths of loyalty), the two texts emphasize different points and disagree on many matters of detail.

The content and literary form of these rules closely resemble the regulations of Greco-Roman associations. Sociologically considered, the Qumran sect is an association whose goal is to create a utopian society for its members. The *Covenant of Damascus* is still set in the real world, but the *Rule of the Community* mandates a society without women, children, private property, discord, falsehood—in sum, a utopian society of the sort that was dreamed about by many political thinkers in antiquity. The utopian elements are also prominent in the descriptions of Philo and Josephus, whose accounts are nearly identical with each other. Both writers say that the Essenes numbered four thousand people and lived in villages and towns throughout the land of Israel. Neither writer highlights the group's exclusiveness and hieratic character. These points accord well with the social setting envisioned by the *Covenant of Damascus.* The tension between the ideal and the real is reflected in Josephus's statement that some Essenes were celibate and that others married to have children. In general, however, both Philo and Josephus emphasize the utopian elements that recur (in different detail) in the *Rule of the Community.* They uphold the Essenes as wondrous exemplars of the philosophic life.

Many of the utopian or "sectarian" features of the Qumran Essenes can be found in other groups as well. The Essene community bears striking similarities to the community of early Christians as described in the opening chapters of the book of Acts. Property is held in common, violators of the rules are punished, the group is controlled by a group of leaders, lots are used in the selection process, entrants into the group require "conversion," and so on. These parallels are in addition to those of attitude (both are eschatologically oriented), doctrine (both see the current world as under the control of wicked forces), and practice (both lay great importance on ablutions or "baptisms").

Not quite as close to the Qumran Essenes is the *havurah* (or *haburah*, "fellowship," "brotherhood"), described in the Mishnah (*Demai* 2:2–3) and

related works. This was an association of those who pledged to observe the laws of purity at all times, even if they had no plans to enter the temple or bring a sacrifice. Many Jews slighted the laws of the priestly tithes, but the members of the *havurah* pledged to observe them punctiliously. As a result, they were unable to eat with anyone outside of their group. Like the *Covenant of Damascus*, the rabbinic legislation envisions a society in which members of the group come into daily and intimate contact with nonmembers, both Jewish and gentile. Like the *Rule of the Community*, the rabbinic legislation requires an oath of all those entering the group and outlines a novitiate of three years, in the course of which the novice gradually attains the rank of a full member. As in the *Community Rule*, his elevation in status is indicated by his ability to share the food and drink of the other members.

Many scholars believe that this *havurah* is a "sectarian" body, since membership requires separation from the larger community, and ascribe its origins to the Pharisees, a group whose name seems to mean "separatists." Whether or not the *havurah* is Pharisaic, its "sectarian" character is uncertain, because the rabbinic legislation, our sole source for the *havurah*, does not clearly state whether the *havurah* is a tight organization or a loose association of religious elitists. Furthermore, while the *havurah* promotes separation from the masses, it is unclear whether the separation is the consequence of a claim to exclusive possession of the truth, like the claims advanced by the Essenes and the Christians. Without a claim to exclusive truth, a group is not a sect (see the next chapter). At Qumran, the sectarians are righteous and therefore pure; everyone else is wicked and therefore impure. The rabbinic legislation seems to be based on the opposite logic. The members of the *havurah* are pure and therefore righteous; everyone else is impure and therefore wicked. In any case, no matter what social reality may be lurking behind the rabbinic legislation about the *havurah*, the affinity with the Qumran legislation shows that separatism based on purity laws was a powerful idea in ancient Judaism that extended even beyond clearly sectarian groups.

Professional Guilds

Unlike synagogues and sects, professional guilds have a long history in the ancient Near East. Workers' and merchants' guilds played an important role in the economies of Babylonia, Assyria, and Egypt. The evidence for the activity of guilds in Israel is not abundant, but it is sufficient to indicate their existence throughout the Second Temple and rabbinic periods. When rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, Nehemiah assigned some of the work to "one of the goldsmiths" and to "one of the perfumers" (Neh. 3:8, 31). The book of 1 Chronicles refers to "families" of scribes (2:55) and weavers ("linen

workers," 4:21). Josephus and the New Testament refer to the practitioners of many crafts (including scribes) but give no indication of how they were organized. Rabbinic texts, however, refer to guilds of wool dealers, dyers, bakers, muleteers, shippers, butchers, and weavers. A Jewish inscription of the second century CE from Joppa mentions a guild of fishermen. According to another rabbinic tradition, one "family" during Second Temple times was responsible for baking the showbread for the temple, another "family" for preparing the incense. One day they went on strike and did not return to work until their wages were doubled. From these and other indications, it is likely that professional guilds were part of the social fabric of ancient Judaism. Other nonreligious associations probably existed too, but they are nowhere mentioned.[9]

Schools

A different sort of organization altogether is the school. According to rabbinic tradition, either Simeon ben Shetah (first century BCE) or Joshua ben Gamla (first century CE) decreed compulsory education for all children, but it is not likely that either tradition has historical value.[10] A few Greek cities in Hellenistic times instituted free public education for children (usually as the result of a grant from a wealthy citizen),[11] but there is no indication that the Jewish community of either the land of Israel or the Diaspora during Second Temple times maintained public schools for children or adults. Josephus and Philo, who boast that all Jews, even children, know the laws of Moses, emphasize the custom of the public reading of the Torah (in the synagogues) and do not mention separate schools. In all likelihood, elementary education was the responsibility of the family. Wealthy (or ignorant!) people might hire a tutor for their children, but generally in the ancient world, elementary education did not go beyond paternal instruction in a craft.

Advanced study, beyond the public reading and explication of the Torah every Sabbath in the synagogue, was almost exclusively the prerogative of the wealthy and the privileged, since only they had the means and the leisure (in Greek, *scholē*, whence Latin *schola* and English "school") to pursue higher

9. For a lexicon of crafts mentioned in rabbinic literature (some organized as guilds), see Meir Ayali, *Nomenclature of Workers and Artisans in the Talmudic and Midrashic Literature* (Tel Aviv, 1984; 2d ed., 2001; in Hebrew). Jewish inscription from Joppa: *Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum*, ed. J. B. Frey (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1952), 2:142–43, no. 945. Temple strike: *b. Yoma* 38a.

10. *Y. Ketubbot* 8.11 32c, and *b. Bava Batra* 21a.

11. Arthur R. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968), 116–30.

education instead of trying to make a living (cf. Sir. 38:24–39:11). What sort of school could one attend? The English word "school" conjures up the image of a corporate, perpetual institution housed in a large building filled with teachers, students, and offices. The ancient world did not know any schools of this type. The Athenian schools founded by Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and Zeno in the fourth and third centuries BCE were perpetual institutions—the Epicurean school still flourished in the second century CE—with graded ranks of students and faculty but were much smaller and more informal than the modern word "school" would suggest. Academies of the Athenian sort did not exist (as far as we know) in the Jewish society of either Judea or the Diaspora in the Second Temple period, although Josephus describes the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes as if they were "schools" (see chap. 5). By his comparison, Josephus means that the doctrines of the Jewish sects resemble those of their Greek counterparts, but perhaps he also is drawing a parallel in organizational structure. Following Josephus's lead, many modern scholars have observed that the utopian organization of the Essenes resembles that of the "school" of the Pythagoreans. But most schools were not brotherhoods of people living in common, and normal schools of the Athenian pattern did not emerge in the land of Israel until the rabbinic period.

A different type of school is the disciple circle, a handful of disciples grouped around a master. The disciples were apprentices who learned by constant attendance upon the master. They watched his every action and listened to his every word. The disciple circle existed as long as the master remained active; upon his death or retirement, the school died. Hence these schools were neither corporate bodies nor perpetual institutions. Disciple circles were the normal pattern for higher education in both Jewish and Greco-Roman antiquity.

The first solid evidence for the institutionalization of higher education in the period of the Second Temple is provided by Ben Sira (ca. 200 BCE), who writes (Sir. 51:23–28):

> Draw near to me, you who are uneducated,
> and lodge in my house of instruction.
> Why do you say you are lacking in these things,
> and why do you endure such great thirst?
> I opened my mouth and said,
> Acquire wisdom for yourselves without money.
> Put your neck under her yoke,
> and let your souls receive instruction;
> it is to be found close by.
> See with your own eyes that I have labored but little
> and found for myself much serenity.
> Hear but a little of my instruction,
> and through me you will acquire silver and gold.

Ben Sira is encouraging his readers, who were well-to-do, to emulate his example and submit to the yoke of wisdom. He invites them to "lodge in my house of instruction," *bet midrashi* (lit., "sit in my house of inquiry"). This school was, presumably, a circle that met in Ben Sira's house. The book of Proverbs, an older representative of Wisdom literature, also presumes a didactic setting (note all the second-person addresses to "my son") but contains no reference to a specific educational setting like the *bet midrash*.

In rabbinic literature, the *bet midrash* figures prominently, although the rabbis never define precisely the nature of the institution. Sometimes the *bet midrash* appears to be a place where a master and his disciples gather for study; sometimes it appears to be an actual building. An inscribed door lintel found in the Golan states, "This is the *bet midrash* of R. Eliezer HaQappar," a rabbi of the second century. (Unfortunately, the rest of the building has disappeared without a trace.) One rabbinic text of the second century refers to "the *bet midrash* at Ardaskus," another to "the *bet midrash* at Lod." These texts imply that by the second century CE the *bet midrash* was becoming a permanent institution in some localities. As a rule, however, the rabbis of the second century did not need a special place for the instruction of their disciples because the disciples were always with the master. They would live, eat, sleep, and travel with him. They would listen to his discussions with other rabbis and watch him decide legal cases. There was little privacy for either party in this relationship; even on his wedding night, Rabban Gamaliel was attended by his faithful disciples. The master was sometimes addressed as "father," because he was the father to his disciples. According to rabbinic law, a student's obligations to his master are similar to those of a son to his father: he must stand up in his presence, greet him, and perhaps even bow down before him. He must not stand or sit in his place, speak in his presence, contradict him, or respond sharply to him. This was the way of Torah. In effect, joining a disciple circle was like joining a new family (cf. Mark 3:32–35; 10:29–31).[12]

These small communities of devoted disciples gathered around a revered master have many analogies, of course, to the earliest community of the followers of Jesus. One of Jesus' major activities, as remarked above, was to teach, and the apostles were his beloved disciples. Jesus was not only a teacher, however; he was also a prophet and a healer, and the traditions about him clearly derive in part from the biblical record about Elijah and his disciple Elisha.

12. Door lintel from the Golan: D. Urman, *Israel Exploration Journal* 22 (1972): 21–23; Joseph Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic: The Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions from Ancient Synagogues* (Israel Exploration Society, 1978; in Hebrew), 25, no. 6. Ardaskus and Lod: *t. Eruvin* 6.4, p. 119 (see the manuscript variants); *t. Pesahim* 3.11, p. 154. R. Gamaliel: *m. Berakhot* 2:5. Obligation of a student to his master: *t. Megillah* 3.24, pp. 360–61.

In contrast, the rabbis of the second century did not claim to be holy men or miracle workers (although some rabbis of the third and fourth centuries did). Another difference is that Jesus' followers consisted mostly of the poor, while the rabbinic following in the second century seems to have come mostly from higher classes (this changed in the third century). The first Christians depended on gifts for their support; the rabbis did not.[13] Although the social settings are quite different, the disciple circle of Jesus closely resembles the disciple circles of the rabbis in the second century.

The historical implications of this reconstruction resemble those stated above, at the conclusion of discussing the synagogue. Schools were private institutions, not public. No single organization supervised schools or "authorized" teachers. The Jewish communities of both the land of Israel and the Diaspora must have seen a large variety of people who were called *didaskalos* or *rabbi* by their followers (cf. John 1:38). Not all of them were Pharisees or members of the select fraternity that produced the Mishnah and related works, and not all of them taught the same interpretation of Judaism.

CONCLUSION

Jewish society of the Second Temple and rabbinic periods was, in many respects, a typical ancient society. It consisted mostly of the poor and the very poor. The aristocracy and the learned elite, who wrote most of the extant literature and figure prominently in the historical narratives, were a small percentage of the population. The "silent majority" included not only the poor but also other powerless groups as well (notably women and slaves). The poor hated the rich with a hatred that occasionally flared into violence. The country dwellers envied and hated the city folk, since the city was the home of tax collectors, landlords, and decadence (that is, culture). The Maccabean rebellion was the triumph of simple priests from the country over high priests from the city. The war of 66–70 was in large part a civil war between the lower priesthood and the high priesthood, between the poor and the rich, and between the country and the city. In all these respects, Jewish society typifies ancient society as a whole.

What made Jewish society "Jewish" was Judaism and its institutions. Everywhere in Greco-Roman society were priests and temples, associations and schools, but the peculiarities of Judaism made the Jewish versions of these institutions, for all of their similarities to their Greco-Roman counterparts, essentially Jewish. No other religion in antiquity developed either the

13. See Matt. 10:9–11; 1 Cor. 9; 2 Cor. 7:10–11; Phil. 4:10–20.

oneness and exclusivism of the Jerusalem temple, or the democratization and mass participation of the synagogue, or the exclusivism and polemical stance of the sects. Even the *politeuma*, a creation of Hellenistic public law, was used by the Jews primarily to defend their rights and ensure freedom of worship. The spirit of Judaism was expressed not only in its practices and beliefs but also in its institutions.

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Chapter 5

Sectarian and Normative

When describing the reign of Jonathan the high priest (mid-140s BCE), Josephus remarks:[1]

> Now at this time there were three schools of thought among the Jews, which held different opinions concerning human affairs; the first being that of the Pharisees, the second that of the Sadducees, and the third that of the Essenes. As for the Pharisees, they say that certain events are the work of Fate, but not all; as to other events, it depends upon ourselves whether they shall take place or not. The sect of Essenes, however, declares that Fate is the mistress of all things, and that nothing befalls men unless in accordance with her decree. But the Sadducees do away with Fate, holding that there is no such thing and that human actions are not achieved in accordance with her decree, but that all things lie within our own power.

When describing events in Judea a century and a half later, Josephus describes the same three "schools of thought" in almost the same language. These accounts of Josephus are puzzling and raise many questions. What is a "school of thought" (*hairesis* in Greek)? When and why did the three "schools of thought" arise? What is their history? What is the meaning and origin of the names Pharisees, Essenes, and Sadducees? Was the eternal question of fate versus free will the central item of debate among these "schools"? Did Judaism have only three "schools of thought," and did all Jews necessarily subscribe to one of them? Neither Josephus nor any other ancient author directly addresses these questions. I begin my answer with a discussion of

1. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 13.5.9 §§171–73.

the terms "sect," "heresy," "orthodoxy," and "normative" and then turn to a historical survey of the Jewish sects in antiquity.

SECT AND HERESY

The English words "sect" and "heresy" usually convey a negative meaning. A sect is a group that "deviates" from the norm and separates from the church; a denomination, by contrast, is a legitimate subgroup of a church. A heresy is an "inauthentic" or "illegitimate" doctrine; a tenet, by contrast, is an "official" or "essential" doctrine. In other words, sects and heresies are religious groups and doctrines of which we disapprove. In their original usage, however, the Latin word *secta* and its equivalent Greek word, *hairesis*, lacked any negative connotation and were neutral terms for "school" (a group of people) or "school of thought" (a group of ideas). When Josephus labeled the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes *haireseis*, he was not dismissing them as sects or heresies but was presenting them as schools or schools of thought that could be appreciated by his Greek readers. *Secta* came to mean "sect" and *hairesis* came to mean "heresy" in the writings of the church fathers, who used these terms to denigrate their opponents.

In this chapter, I use the word "sect" in another sense entirely. (I avoid the term "heresy," as I shall explain below.) Here is my definition:

> A sect is a small, organized group that separates itself from a larger religious body and asserts that it alone embodies the ideals of the larger group because it alone understands God's will.

This definition is a modern one and is derived from the sociology of medieval and modern Christianity. Although scholars debate which characteristics are essential for a sect and which are only incidental (like obscenity, a sect is more easily recognized than defined), I think that any "minimal" definition would resemble the one that I have given.

A sect must be *small* enough to be a distinctive part of a *larger religious body*. If a sect grows to the extent that it is a large body in its own right, it is no longer a sect but something else. (How large a sect has to be in order to cease being a sect, and what exactly it becomes after having outgrown its status as a sect—these questions are debated by sociologists, but they need not be treated here.) In the period under review in this book, one Jewish sect, perhaps two, outgrew its sectarian origin to become an independent freestanding religious body. Out of the Christian sect came Christianity; and out of the Pharisaic group (sect?), perhaps, came rabbinic Judaism, also known simply as Judaism.

A sect must be *organized.* Sects usually have an administrative structure, a process of initiation for new members, rules for proper conduct, and the threat of expulsion for members who are recalcitrant. In many sects, new members are acquired only through conversion, not birth. (Of course, this is sometimes true of religions as well. Tertullian, a church father of the late second century, boasted that "Christians are made, not born.")

A sect *separates itself* from society, but the separation can take various forms. The members of the sect might flee to the desert or some other isolated place. Or they might live among, but not with, their nonsectarian coreligionists. They create taboos ("boundaries") that inhibit normal social intercourse between members of the group (the "pure," "righteous," "elect") and nonmembers (the "impure," "wicked," "damned"). No matter what form the separation takes, it is generally caused by a sense of alienation from the rest of society, especially from society's central institutions. In many cases (as at Qumran), a dualistic theology, which divides the supernatural realm between God and Satan (see chap. 3), mirrors a dualistic social perspective, which divides humanity between the sons of light and the sons of darkness. Social alienation might also express itself in intense eschatological speculation, by which the sect reassures itself that its current status of powerlessness is only temporary. In the future, the sect will be glorified and its enemies will be discomfited.

A sect asserts that *it alone embodies the ideals of the larger group.* In Jewish terms, this means that a sect sees itself as the true Israel. At best, all other Jews are sinners; at worst, they hardly deserve the name "Israel" at all. The contrasting perspectives of the sect and society at large are revealed by the appellations that each has for the other. The sect might use self-designations that are elitist (e.g., "the elect of Israel," "the righteous remnant," "the blessed of God," "the sons of light") or pietist (e.g., "the repenters of Israel," "the righteous ones," "the pious ones," "those who have entered the new covenant"), or it might simply call itself "Israel" (as the Samaritans and the Christians did—and do). The rest of the Jews are dismissed as "the wicked," "the oppressors," "the sons of darkness," and so on. In return, the opponents of the sect might bestow on it all sorts of uncomplimentary epithets in order to deny its legitimacy. The sect has "sundered itself" from the rest of Israel (the name "Pharisee," in all likelihood, was originally an opprobrious epithet meaning "separatist"), and advocates an "intrusive" or "illegitimate" or "new" ideology.

The sect's claim to be the exclusive embodiment of the ideals of the larger community is based on its claim that *it alone understands God's will.* This assertion was buttressed by a variety of means. A sect might claim that it or its leader is privy to a new revelation from God that was unknown to or unappreciated by outsiders. Or it might claim that it is the bearer of an ancient

tradition or that it has rediscovered the true religion, which had been forgotten or corrupted by the majority. Or it might claim that only it properly understands the sacred Scriptures or that only it has correctly selected the books that provide religious guidance. In sum, the sect contends that only its authority figures can speak on behalf of God, because those of society at large do not have access to the truth.

In the final analysis, what makes a sect a sect is its separation and exclusivity. Guilds, clubs, synagogues, and schools resemble sects in that they are small voluntary associations, but as long as they neither separate themselves from society at large nor claim exclusive possession of the truth, they are not sects. In some instances, a group can separate itself from the majority and still not be a sect; the "orders" of the Catholic Church are the classic examples. The Benedictine Order is a small organized group that separates itself from society and conducts itself in accordance with a rule (The Rule of St. Benedict) that resembles the Qumran *Community Rule* in both form and content. But the Benedictines are not a sect because they see themselves, and are seen by the church, as an elite, not as the sole possessors of Christian truth. They admit that non-Benedictine Christians who live righteous lives will attain salvation. They derive their legitimation not from some proprietary revelation or sacred text (Benedict is a saint for the entire church), but from the same pope who presides over all other Catholics.

THE FOCAL POINTS OF JEWISH SECTARIANISM

Sects feel alienated from the rest of the world. They feel that the traditional values and practices of society have been corrupted or are no longer adequate; that society is irredeemably sinful; that society has not granted a particular individual or group (usually the sect itself) deserved recognition or that it has granted a particular individual or group (some other sect) undeserved recognition. As a result of these feelings, the sect concludes that its only option, until the heavenly forces inaugurate a new order of things on earth, is to separate from society and to create a more perfect community. By the time a sect has separated itself and become a distinct group, it is difficult to determine the original cause of its alienation, because the feelings that were its cause are now reinforced or superseded by feelings that are its effect.

For example, one Qumran document presents a "we" group castigating a "you" group for not properly observing some twenty laws in the areas of ritual purity, temple offerings, marriage, and the like. After listing these topics of dispute, the writer says, "[You know that] we have separated ourselves from the multitude of the people [and from all their impurity] and from mingling

with them in these matters."[2] The author seems to imply that the failure of the multitude to properly observe these purity laws and temple rituals compelled the Qumran group to separate itself from the rest of Israel. In other words, the document purports to reveal the causes of the sect's alienation from general society. This point is debatable. Surely the Qumran group separated itself from the rest of Israel because of some deep-seated grievances and not because of disputes over technical details of the laws of purity. It is significant that in this document the sect chooses to attribute its origins to disputes over details of law and practice, a point to which I shall return in a moment, but surely this document reveals the effects or symptoms of the group's social alienation and not its causes.

Whether as a cause or an effect of its alienation, a sect rejects or at least harshly criticizes the institutions and practices venerated by the rest of society. In ancient Judaism, the targets of sectarian polemics were primarily three: law, temple, and scriptural interpretation. I shall treat each of these separately.

Law as Focal Point

Christianity is a creedal religion, and Christian sectarianism too is creedal. The vast majority of the sectarian debates of early Christianity centered on theological questions, especially the nature and interrelationship of the first two persons of the Trinity. Judaism, however, was not (and, in large measure, is not) a creedal religion. The cutting edge of ancient Jewish sectarianism was not theology but law. Of course, sects often advocated peculiar doctrinal views, but these did not play the formative role that the legal positions did. Abundant evidence makes this point clear: the protosectarianism of the Persian period; the critique of Jewish society contained in the *Rule of the Community* and the *Damascus Covenant* of Qumran; the Qumran document mentioned in the previous paragraph; Josephus's assertion that the Pharisees accept the validity of "the ancestral traditions" while the Sadducees do not; the New Testament's account of the debates between the Pharisees and Jesus; and the rabbinic accounts of the debates between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. All this material emphasizes the legal character of the debates among the sects and ignores or slights philosophical and theological matters.

There is some evidence on the other side, to be sure: Josephus's portrait of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes as philosophical "schools" that debate the eternal questions of fate, free will, and the immortality of the soul; and the New Testament's view that the distinguishing characteristic of the Sadducees

2. 4QMMT (*Some Observances of the Law*) part C, in Géza Vermès, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, new ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 227.

is their denial of the resurrection of the dead (a perspective shared by one stray rabbinic text).[3] The two sources written in Greek (Josephus and the New Testament) support both the legal and the philosophical interpretations of Jewish sectarian dispute, while the sources written in Hebrew (Qumran scrolls and rabbinic texts) support the legal interpretation exclusively. I conclude that sectarian dispute focused primarily on legal questions, a pattern that continued in the Jewish sectarianism of the Middle Ages, and that the Greek sources advanced the opposite perspective for the benefit of their intended non-Jewish audience.

Three areas of law in particular were the subjects of debate: marriage, Sabbath and festivals, temple and purity. In the view of the sect, the ruling elite (or society at large) has contracted illegal marriages. Either they do not properly understand the intricacies of the table of forbidden relations given in Leviticus 18 and 20 or they marry "foreign" women. By denouncing these marriages and thereby delegitimating the offspring of their opponents, the sectarians not only confirm their belief that only they practice Judaism properly; they also erect a barrier that prohibits marriage between themselves and the rest of society. The Sabbath and the festivals were celebrated communally both in the temple and outside it; then by advancing a peculiar interpretation of these rituals, the members of the sect distance themselves from the common patterns of religiosity. At Qumran this separation reached an extreme form; the sect advocated not only a particularly severe mode of observance for the Sabbath but also a peculiar calendar that was not followed by the rest of the community. The day the Jews of Qumran celebrated as the Day of Atonement was a regular workday for all other Jews.

Last, the laws governing temple and purity always figured prominently in sectarian self-definition. The purity laws are outlined in Leviticus (esp. the first half) and Numbers (esp. Num. 19). Impurity is contracted chiefly through contact with a human corpse, an "impure" animal, or a sexual discharge (from either a man or a woman). The laws are complex because so many variables are involved: the source of the impurity; the means by which the impurity is transferred to persons, foodstuffs, and objects; the degree of the impurity; and the method of purification. Each of these variables was treated by the Torah, and each was analyzed at great length in Second Temple times (esp. at Qumran) and in rabbinic times. The English words "pure" and "impure" may create the impression that these laws are either hygienic ("pure" for "clean," and "impure" for "dirty") or metaphoric ("pure" for "righteous" or "good," "impure" for "wicked" or "bad"), but this impression is wrong. Leviticus does not care whether certain animals (e.g., pigs) are dirty, since that is irrelevant

3. Mark 12:18–27; Acts 4:2; 23:6–8; *Avot of Rabbi Nathan* A 5 and B 10.

to their status of impurity; nor does Leviticus include obvious sources of "dirt" (e.g., feces and urine) among the sources of impurity. Leviticus 16:30 equates atonement with purification, an equation that we also find in various Qumran texts (notably the *Community Rule*) and in the preaching of John the Baptist (Mark 1:4–5). But for the most part in Leviticus, sin is not the cause of impurity, and righteousness is not synonymous with purity. (The term "*ritual* impurity," used by many modern scholars, emphasizes this fact.)

According to Leviticus and Numbers, anyone and anything that enters the "camp," the abode of God, must be pure. That which is impure must be expelled from the camp (Lev. 13:46; Num. 5:1–4). The camp includes all the children of Israel: the tabernacle, the priests and Levites, and the twelve tribes. It was not until the period of the Second Temple that the full implications of this conception were actualized. Pietists and sectarians observed all the purity laws, because God was in the "camp." Purity was a matter of daily life. The food on one's table was akin to meat on the altar; a priest's obligation to observe the purity laws when entering the sanctuary was akin to that of the Jew who lived in the "camp." The Jews of Qumran, and the "fellowship" (*havurah*) described in the previous chapter, exemplify this way of life. It was probably fear of impurity that impelled the Essenes of Qumran to prohibit women from their midst. For most Jews of the Second Temple period, however, the sanctification of daily life was not implemented to such a radical degree. They felt, as the majority of rabbis did later, that the "camp" included only the temple and the Temple Mount. Jews who wished to enter the temple or bring a sacrifice purified themselves. Archaeological excavations at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem have revealed a whole series of baths adjacent to the steps leading to the main entrance of the temple. Here the faithful would bathe before entering the sacred precincts. Away from the temple, however, most Jews saw no need to observe the purity laws since they were no longer in the "camp" described by Leviticus.

Even more than the laws of marriage and the Sabbath, the laws of purity prevent normal social intercourse between those who observe them and those who do not. Those who observe the laws cannot share the table, utensils, or food of those who do not. They must avoid physical contact (e.g., a handshake) with those who are impure. It is natural, then, for a sect to develop its own idiosyncratic purity regulations in order to give concrete expression to its sense of alienation and exclusivity. The sectarian community is a place of purity that not only rivals the temple but also supplants it. The temple is polluted, the priests corrupt, and the rituals debased. The temple is a site of impurity and must be purified of its contagion before it can resume its rightful place in the divine order. This is the attitude of a sect, and it is to this attitude that I now turn.

Temple as Focal Point

Throughout its existence, the Second Temple enjoyed a status that, in paradoxical fashion, was both substantially higher and substantially lower than that of the First Temple. No longer under the thumb of the monarchs, no longer the target of the polemics of the prophets, no longer rivaled seriously by "high places" and other temples—the Second Temple and its cult gained a centrality and importance that the First Temple never achieved. The priesthood became the aristocracy, and the high priest became the leader of the country. With the growth of the Diaspora, the temple became the recipient of donations and the goal of pilgrimage for Jews throughout the world. After being rebuilt by Herod the Great, Jerusalem became one of the most famous cities of the East, and its temple was the object of universal admiration.

But the newfound importance of the temple could not hide several difficult problems. The First Temple was built by a Davidic king, authorized by a prophet, and authenticated through the miraculous manifestation of God (a cloud of smoke and, according to Chronicles, fire from heaven[4]); it was the splendid achievement of a splendid reign. The Second Temple, by contrast, although authorized by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, was built by a gentile king and was never authenticated by an overt sign of divine favor. Second Isaiah, in his prophecy announcing God's selection of Cyrus the Great to be his "anointed one" to free the Jews from the Babylonian captivity and to build the temple, is aware that some Jews do not approve of God's plan ("Woe to you who strive with your Maker, earthen vessels with the potter! Does the clay say to the one who fashions it, 'What are you making'?" [Isa. 45:9]). The old men who had seen the First Temple in its glory cried at the dedication of the Second Temple (Ezra 3:12)—apparently tears of sadness as they contemplated the puny temple that was before them. In the second century BCE, the temple's problematic status was revealed to all. The high priests were corrupted, and the temple was profaned by a gentile monarch. Even after it was regained and purified by pious Jews, there was no prophet to approve their work and no miracle to assure them that the temple was once again the abode of God. The Maccabees installed themselves as high priests, although they were not of the high-priestly line. When the Romans conquered Jerusalem in 63 BCE, they entered the sacred precincts, polluting them with their presence. Herod the Great rebuilt the temple magnificently, but his detractors viewed him as a "half-Jew." He completely debased the high priesthood, appointing men who had even less claim than the Maccabees to be the legitimate successors of Aaron. Looking back on the Second

4. See 1 Kgs. 8:10–11; 2 Chr. 7:1.

Temple, the rabbis observed, "The second temple lacked five things found in the first: the sacred fire,[5] the ark, the *Urim* and *Thummim*, the oil for anointing, and the holy spirit."[6]

Thus although the Second Temple emerged as the central symbol and institution of Judaism, and although the priesthood, especially the high priesthood, emerged as the new aristocracy of the Jewish polity, both temple and priesthood, especially after the Maccabean period, had serious ideological weakness. How could the Jews be sure that the institution and the people who claimed to mediate between them and God were really authorized to do so? The sects argued that the temple and the priests did not find favor in God's eyes. The exclusive claims to truth advanced by the temple—"one temple for the one God," as Josephus puts it[7]—were arrogated by the sect itself. Instead of the polluted temple and the corrupt priests, the sect and its leaders offer the only access to God. Either explicitly or implicitly, the sect sees itself and its authority figures as the replacements for the temple and its priests. This self-perception is well attested at Qumran and in early Christianity;[8] the major distinction between them was that the Jews of Qumran saw *their* community as the *temporary* replacement for the temple, since God would erect a new temple in the future, while (some of) the early Christians argued that *their* community was its *permanent* replacement (Rev. 21:22). The daily observance of purity laws by laypeople, a practice that characterized Pharisees (perhaps), the Qumran sect, and various others, was an arrogation of laws that originally applied to the temple alone.

The close connection between the temple and sectarianism is also shown by the fact that the important stages in the development of Jewish sectarianism coincide with the important stages in the history of the Second Temple. Sects appeared in inchoate form in the Persian period, when the newly built temple was trying to establish its legitimacy. They emerged fully developed in the second century BCE after the temple had been profaned by Epiphanes and purified by the Maccabees. Sects disappeared after 70 CE, because the destruction of the temple removed one of the chief focal points of sectarianism.

Scriptural Interpretation as Focal Point

By the time the Jews returned from Babylonia in the Persian period, classical prophecy of the sort perfected by the prophets of the eighth and early sixth

5. Contrast the story in 2 Macc. 1.
6. *Y. Taʿanit* 2.1 65a; *b. Yoma* 21b.
7. Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.23 §193.
8. See, e.g., 1 Cor. 3:16–17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:19–22; 1 Pet. 2:1–10.

centuries BCE was on the wane. The Jews recognized that God no longer spoke to them in the same way as in the past. The prophets who persisted in seeing heavenly visions and hearing heavenly voices saw and heard in a manner very different from those of earlier times. As a consequence (cause?) of the cessation or permutation of prophecy, the Jews began to seek the word of the Lord not from people but from texts. The sacred traditions of the past were compiled and redacted, and the Torah was created. The words of the great prophets of the past were similarly compiled and redacted. This process, whose ultimate result was the formation of the Bible (see next chapter), raised two important questions. First, which books were to be considered canonical (in the sense of "authoritative")? Second, how were the canonical books to be interpreted, and who was authorized to interpret them?

A canon includes certain works and excludes others. In Christianity, the selection of the canonical books of the New Testament was a battleground between "orthodoxy" and "heresy." One "orthodox" church father of the late second century refuted the "heretics" by appealing to the Christian canon: only four Gospels are true (canonical); no other Gospel is a valid source for church doctrine; therefore anyone who reveres any other Gospel is not a member of the holy and true catholic church.[9] In contrast, the formation of the biblical canon did not play a role in the sectarian debates of ancient Judaism. In Second Temple times, the biblical canon was very fluid. All Jews regarded the Torah as authoritative, and all Jews except the Samaritans regarded the prophetic books as authoritative. But the nature and degree of the authority that was ascribed to these books, and the identity of the other books that also were to be regarded as authoritative, varied greatly from community to community. The Essenes of Qumran criticized the religious behavior of their fellow Jews, but failure to respect the Essene writings is not among their complaints. No ancient source implies that the constitution of the canon was a focal point of sectarian dispute. There is no evidence that any central body (e.g., the temple priesthood) tried to impose on the population a unified canon. Thus the formation of the biblical canon was an integral part of the sectarian debate in Christianity, but in Judaism it was not. Jewish sects composed and preserved works that they alone considered authoritative, but this activity was not apparently essential either to their self-definition or to the way in which they were defined by their opponents.

A clearer focus of sectarian debate was the interpretation of the Bible. Since the word of God was no longer revealed through the prophets, as in the old days, the Jews turned to the exegesis of holy writ. Through interpretation, the eternal verities of the texts could be discovered and made relevant to the

9. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.

contemporary situation. Torah study became a fixed part of the liturgy, and a class of learned sages arose whose claim to prominence was based on their erudition and expertise in scriptural interpretation (see chap. 3). Sects, too, claimed to derive their doctrines and practices from Scripture, with the added claim, of course, that only *their* interpretation was correct. Biblical interpretation was an essential part of sectarian self-definition. Origen, a church father of the mid-third century, explains that "the variety of the interpretations of the writings of Moses and the sayings of the prophets" was one of the major causes for the rise of "schools of thought" (Origen uses the term *haireseis*) among the Jews.[10] This explanation also applies to the rise of Jewish sects (in the sense used in this chapter).

The Israelites of the preexilic period had to struggle with the problem of distinguishing the true prophet from the false. Both the true and the false proclaimed, "Thus speaks the LORD," but only one of them was true. The Jews of the Second Temple period still had to contend with the problem of false prophecy, but in great measure this problem was replaced by a new one: How was one to distinguish the true (that is, authoritative, canonical) books and the true (that is, correct) scriptural interpretations from the false? The sects provided clear answers to these questions.

"ORTHODOX" AND "NORMATIVE"

Throughout this book I avoid the terms "orthodox" and "normative" (and their antonyms "heretical" and "schismatic"). In this section I explain why.

The Greek word *orthodoxia*, the ancestor of the English "orthodoxy," means "right opinion," just as the Latin word *norma*, the ancestor of the English "normal" and "normative," means "standard of behavior." The terms therefore imply the "rightness" of the religious variety to which they are applied. "Orthodox Judaism" is Judaism that is *true*—revealed by God and sanctioned by tradition. "Normative Judaism" is the *dominant* form of Judaism—the form practiced and revered as legitimate by the largest number of Jews. The two meanings overlap but are not identical. Defining one variety of Judaism as orthodox makes a theological judgment, a confession of faith not susceptible to rational inquiry. Whether the Judaism of the Pharisees is "truer" than that of the Sadducees and whether the Judaism of Gamaliel is "truer" than that of Jesus and Paul—these are questions that a historian cannot answer.

10. Origen, *Against Celsus* 3.12, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 135.

A historian cannot describe any variety of Judaism as orthodox unless clearly writing from a confessional perspective.

To define one variety of Judaism as normative is a historical judgment, a statement that this variety was more widely practiced than others, but here too the notion of "rightness" almost invariably intrudes. In the period of the First Temple, if we may believe the tirades of the prophets, most Israelites went whoring after foreign gods, sacrificing to them on every hilltop and under every tree. The religion of the masses and, at certain times, of the state as well was polytheistic: the God of Israel was worshiped alongside other gods. Shouldn't we call Israelite polytheism "normative"? We do not do so because the biblical prophets and historians, who are deemed by both Judaism and Christianity to have been the bearers of the word of God, roundly condemned such practices. Thus even the term "normative" conveys a notion of "rightness" and is therefore avoided here. (Appropriate substitutes are "popular" or "dominant.")

This issue can be approached from a different perspective. What is Judaism? Is it the religious behavior of all people who call themselves and are known to others as Jews, Israelites, and Hebrews? Or is it an ideal set of beliefs and practices against which the practices and beliefs of real Jews are to be measured and judged? If the former, Judaism is a relativistic construct of human beings, and no variety of Judaism is any more correct or authentic than any other. This is the perspective of the historian. If the latter, Judaism is a body of absolute truths revealed by God and/or sanctioned by tradition, and those interpretations of Judaism that more nearly approximate these absolute truths are truer and more authentic than those that do not. This is the perspective of the believer. In this book, I write as a historian.

Another objection to the term "orthodoxy" is that it introduces a meaningless concept into ancient Judaism. The church councils of the fourth century prescribed the acceptable limits of Christian practice and belief, defined the canon, established creeds, and anathematized sects and heresies. In other words, these councils defined "orthodoxy." Indeed, it was during the fourth century that the term "orthodox" (and related words) began to be widely used by patristic writers to distinguish "true" Christianity from "false." The rise of the papacy made the process of self-definition even easier. Whoever was admitted to communion with the bishop of Rome was orthodox; whoever was not was a heretic. The party that triumphed in the fourth century, thereby becoming Christian orthodoxy, saw itself as the representative of the Christianity that had been believed "everywhere, always, and by all."[11] The numer-

11. So phrased by the Vincentian Canon (Vincent of Lérins, *Commonitorium* 2.3), ca. 434.

ous other interpretations of Christianity during the early centuries were dismissed as "sects" and "heresies." Jesus and Paul established "orthodoxy," and all the sects that bedeviled the church in its infancy were corruptions of the one holy and true catholic church. Thus the triumph of "orthodoxy" was accompanied by heresiology (the study and refutation of "heresies"), ecclesiology (the definition of the church community, reading certain people in and certain people out), and ecclesiastical historiography (the writing of church history from the perspective of the triumphant party).

Judaism, by contrast, has never had either a pope or church councils, and without these there is no objective criterion for determining "orthodoxy." The temple was the central authority against which sects defined themselves, but the high priests lacked sufficient power to be able to state which forms of Judaism were orthodox or to exclude from the temple those Jews whose practices they condemned. After the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, the rabbinic movement gradually assumed the role of central authority, but that process took several centuries, and the rabbis were never unified sufficiently either to elect a pope or to convene synods. Judaism did not produce heresiology, ecclesiology, or ecclesiastical historiography until the Middle Ages, when the rabbis were confronted by the sect of Karaites within and the militancy of Islam and Christianity without. The rabbinic literature of antiquity contains, to be sure, isolated passages that attack various sects (notably the Sadducees), define the limits of tolerable practice or belief, and project upon the worthies of the past (e.g., Moses "our rabbi") the values of rabbinic culture; yet rabbinic literature lacks the coherent self-definition so abundantly attested in the Christian literature of the fourth century. The word "orthodox" was not applied to a variety of Judaism until the nineteenth century, when the opponents of reform organized themselves under the banner of "orthodox and Torah-true Judaism." These Jews, in order to delegitimize reform, adopted the historical perspective that the medieval rabbis had turned against the Karaites. "Orthodox Judaism" to this day still sees itself as the representative of that Judaism which has been believed "everywhere, always, and by all." The only way to avoid the accumulated theological and polemical baggage attached to "orthodox" and "normative" is to avoid the terms and the concepts they convey.

PROTOSECTARIANISM IN THE PERSIAN PERIOD

During the period of the First Temple, there was no shortage of religious conflict—between prophets and kings, between prophets and priests, between priests and kings, between "true" and "false" prophets, between polytheists

and monotheists, between those who advocated worship throughout the land and those who permitted it only in Jerusalem—but these conflicts did not produce sects. At no point did the prophets secede from the nation to form their own sects. Preexilic society provides only one example of a body that in any way resembles the sects of later times. This is the "house of the Rechabites," a clan (association?) that had been commanded by its "father" (founder?), Jonadab ben Rechab, to refrain from drinking wine, building houses, and cultivating land (Jer. 35). By early medieval times, the Jewish and Christian imagination had assimilated the Rechabites to the Essenes, but the Rechabites described by Jeremiah, even if they were not a clan but a group of pietists, lack all the distinguishing characteristics of a sect.

Why didn't the religious conflicts of the First Temple period produce sects? There are many possible answers to this question, but here I offer one suggestion that develops a point made earlier. In the preexilic period, the dominant component of Israelite identity was ethnicity or birth. As I discussed in chapter 2, conversion to Judaism did not exist in preexilic times, because a society in which identity is based on birth is incapable of establishing a regular process by which outsiders can be naturalized. The institution of conversion to Judaism presumes that citizenship in the Jewish polity is a matter of religion (or politics or culture or whatever) as well as birth. Sectarianism, too, defines citizenship in the Jewish polity in terms of religion. In the eyes of a sect, because most native-born Jews do not observe Judaism correctly, they have lost their status as Jews; they are no longer "Israel." The transition from identity based on birth to identity based on religion facilitated the emergence of both conversion and sectarianism. Each is absent from the preexilic period, begins to emerge in the Persian period, and reaches full development only in the second century BCE.

The religious disputes within the Jewish communities of Babylonia and Israel during the Persian period were many and varied. Out of these disputes arose groups that in many ways prefigure the sects of later times. After briefly discussing the activities of Ezra and Nehemiah, I shall examine the three best-attested protosects: "the congregation of the (returned) exile," mentioned in the book of Ezra; the group represented by Nehemiah 10; and the group represented by Isaiah 65.

Ezra and Nehemiah

Law, temple, and scriptural interpretation, the three focal points of Jewish sectarianism, are also the focal points of the activity of Ezra and Nehemiah. As the later sects would do, the two reformers attacked the manner in which the larger society was observing the laws relating to marriage, the Sabbath

and festivals, and the temple and purity. Both Ezra and Nehemiah enforced the prohibition of intermarriage, which had been violated primarily by the priesthood and the aristocracy. Nehemiah enforced the observance of the Sabbath laws, and he rearranged the system of the tithes and temple offerings. He also purified the temple precincts, a procedure that involved the expulsion of Tobiah "the Ammonite," who had been domiciled in one of the temple chambers at the invitation of the high priest (Neh. 13:7–8).

The major targets of all the actions of Ezra and Nehemiah were the priests and their allies. Ezra read to the public "the book of the instruction [*Torah*] of Moses" and, assisted by the Levites, explained its meaning (Neh. 8). Deut. 31:10–13 had commanded the assembled Israelites to hear "the Torah" read aloud every seventh year; Ezra took this idea and ran with it, not only reading the Torah but also explaining it. In effect, Ezra "published" the Torah by making it accessible to the masses. This was a direct threat to the political hegemony of the priesthood. The word *Torah* means instruction, but in preexilic times the primary meaning of the word was "priestly instruction" (e.g., Jer. 18:18). Ezra, however, tried to remove the priest as the intermediary between the people and the sacred traditions by giving the people direct access to "the book of the Torah." The Romans regarded the publication of the Twelve Tables in 451 BCE (a date that, by curious coincidence, is nearly identical with that of Ezra) as a significant step in the gradual dissolution of the power of the patricians, because a law that is fixed and publicly available reduces the potential for arbitrary and capricious rulings by the magistrates. By giving the masses free access to the Torah, Ezra was curbing the power of the priestly magistrates. In his work he was aided by the Levites, a group that was at odds with the priesthood throughout the Second Temple period (Nehemiah, too, was aided by the Levites) and that read the Torah not in the temple itself but at the Water Gate, probably because the temple priests wanted no part of Ezra's reforms.

What gave Ezra and Nehemiah the authority to oppose the priests, dissolve their marriages, eject their friends from the temple, and rearrange the temple offerings and sacrifices? Both Ezra and Nehemiah were officials in the Persian bureaucracy and therefore supported by the power of the state. Ezra was the recipient of a special charter from the king, which appointed him minister in charge of Jewish affairs (Ezra 7), while Nehemiah was the governor of the district of Judea. In addition to this external legitimation, Ezra's authority was confirmed internally. He is said to have been a priest of the high-priestly line (Ezra 7:1–5), but nowhere does this fact play a role in the narrative. Perhaps because he did not serve as high priest, he was willing to act against the interests of his class.

More important for the legitimation of Ezra's authority was his status as "a scribe skilled in the law [*Torah*] of Moses" (Ezra 7:6). Throughout the

ancient Near East, scribes were the functionaries who ran the government, administered the civil service, and prepared correspondence and contracts. Ezra was a "Jewish" scribe whose expertise derived not from the common law of the ancient Near East but from the teachings of Moses. His authority, then, was based on erudition. He was able to teach the Torah and to determine the validity of the marriages contracted by the aristocracy because of his superior expertise. Nehemiah was neither a priest nor a scribe, but we may presume that he too sought an internal legitimation for his authority in his superior expertise and piety. Even the priests in the temple were subject to him because they did not know as well as he how to administer the temple in a way that would find favor in God's eyes.

Like the sects of later times, Ezra and Nehemiah emphasize the laws of marriage, Sabbath, temple, and purity; attack the power of the priests, especially the high priests; and justify their authority by appealing to their superior expertise in the Torah of Moses. Although they regard the priesthood as incompetent or corrupt, they venerate the temple and place it at the center of their religion. For the biblical narrator, the Jews who supported Ezra and Nehemiah constituted not a separate group but the Judean community as a whole. This is not the place for a full discussion of the actions of Ezra and Nehemiah or for an assessment of the correctness of this view. What is relevant here is that the narrative, against its own thesis, shows that Ezra and Nehemiah were the leaders not of all but only of some of the Jews and that these followers were members of a distinctive group. I now turn to these protosectarian organizations of the Persian period.

The Congregation of the Exile and Nehemiah 10

The book of Ezra uses the terms "the exile," "the members of the exile," and "the congregation of the exile" to refer to the people who returned from Babylonia to Israel in the days of Zerubbabel and Ezra (that is, they are not Jews *in* the exile but *from* the exile). The author sees "the congregation of the exile" as an organized and disciplined group, the embodiment of authentic Judaism (in other words, "the church"). These Jews rebuild the temple, rebuff the "adversaries of Judah and Benjamin" (Ezra 4:1), dedicate the temple, celebrate the Passover (6:19–20), and offer sacrifices on behalf of the twelve tribes of Israel (8:35). Their ranks are augmented by those who "joined them and separated themselves from the pollutions of the nations of the land to worship the LORD, the God of Israel" (6:21), a reference to "converts" (gentiles? Jews?) who joined their community. When it is reported to Ezra that certain members of "the exile" have married foreign women, a proclamation is issued for all "returned exiles" to gather at the square in front of the temple; whoever

did not obey within three days was to have his property confiscated and he himself was to be excluded from "the congregation of the exiles" (10:7–8). More than one hundred people were discovered to have intermarried, and they were ordered to divorce their foreign wives and their children. (Whether they obeyed is not entirely clear.[12])

Although the book of Nehemiah does not use the term "the exile" in this sense, it is familiar with a similar type of group. Nehemiah 8 describes the reading and teaching of the Torah to "the people" by Ezra. Nehemiah 9 is the record of a public fast and atonement service that was prompted by the Torah reading, just as the discovery of the book of Deuteronomy a century and a half earlier was the occasion for public repentance and atonement. (Scholars debate whether the connection between Nehemiah 8 and 9–10 is original or secondary; Ezra is the major figure in Nehemiah 8 but is not mentioned in the Hebrew text of Nehemiah 9–10 .) The highlight of that service was a long penitential prayer, in the first-person plural, that culminates in Nehemiah 10 with a "covenant" or "pledge." The cosigners of this document, listed by name and speaking still in the first-person plural, obligate themselves to follow the teaching (Torah) of God and to observe all his commandments, specifically to avoid intermarriage with "the peoples of the land"; not to have commercial dealings with "the peoples of the land" on the Sabbath; to observe the seventh year ("the year of release"); and to support the temple and its priesthood through a wide variety of offerings (money, wood, firstfruits, firstborn, dough, and crops).

Like "the congregation of the exile," the signers of this document claim to be the embodiment of authentic Judaism and are viewed by the biblical narrator as "the church" that represents the entire people (rabbinic texts refer to the signatories as "the men of the great assembly"). The list of signatures concludes with "the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to adhere to the law of God" (Neh. 10:28 [29]). Like "the congregation of the exile," this group too was augmented by outsiders (Jewish? gentile? cf. Ezra 6:21). While "the congregation of the exile" is associated with Ezra, the group behind Nehemiah 10 is associated with Nehemiah, the first and most prominent of the signatories. The covenant highlights laws that are modifications or extensions of those Nehemiah enforced during his second tenure as governor (in 432 BCE): the elimination of intermarriage and the expulsion of foreigners from the temple (Neh. 13:1–9, 23–30), support of the temple and its clergy through tithes and offerings (13:10–14, 30–31), and the avoidance of commerce on the Sabbath (13:15–22). (The covenant's

12. Text and meaning of Ezra 10:44 are not clear.

concern with "the year of release" perhaps reflects an act of Nehemiah during his first tenure in office in 445 BCE, the cancellation of debts as recounted in Neh. 5.)

Both of these groups are protosects. "The congregation of the exile" regards itself as the authentic expression of Judaism; its opponents are the "adversaries of Judah and Benjamin." Jews (that is, those who venerate the God of Israel) outside the group are regarded as foreigners and therefore not marriageable by members of the group. (Yet the priests, who are obsessed with genealogical purity, married the daughters of these outsiders; and some of these outsiders had Jewish names like "Tobiah"—twin facts implying that these people were not real foreigners at all, in spite of the polemical application of the adjectives "Ammonite," "Moabite," etc.) Those who violated the group's discipline were subject to expulsion. Nehemiah 10, the "covenant" of a related group, in form resembles the Qumran *Community Rule*. It states the reason for the group's existence ("to walk in God's law [Torah]"; 10:29 [30]) and emphasizes the rules that are especially important for the group's self-definition. These rules, like those of later sectarianism, center on marriage, Sabbath, and the temple offerings (only the purity rules are missing).

Isaiah 65

A different sort of protosect is the group that stands behind Isaiah 65. The anonymous author of the last chapters of the book of Isaiah is known to modern scholarship as Third Isaiah (or Trito-Isaiah). Isaiah 63–64 is a psalm of lament that bewails the destruction of Jerusalem and beseeches God to relent from his anger. In chapter 65, God (or the prophet speaking on his behalf in the first-person singular) responds. God has called out to his people but they have refused to listen, as 65:1–3a declares:

> I was ready to be sought out by those who did not ask,
> to be found by those who did not seek me.
> I said, "Here I am, here I am,"
> to a nation that did not call on my name
> [or: to a nation that is not called by my name].
> I held out my hands all day long
> to a rebellious people,
> who walk in a way that is not good,
> following their own devices;
> a people who provoke me
> to my face continually.

This is followed by a description of their abominable acts: they eat swine and perform many forbidden (idolatrous) rituals. Therefore God shall destroy them, but not all of them (65:8–15):

> For my servants' sake,
> [I will] not destroy them all.
> I will bring forth descendants from Jacob,
> and from Judah inheritors of my mountains;
> my chosen shall inherit it,
> and my servants shall settle there…
> But you who forsake the LORD,
> who forget my holy mountain…I will destine you to the sword,
> and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter…
> My servants shall eat,
> but you shall be hungry;
> my servants shall drink,
> but you shall be thirsty;
> my servants shall rejoice,
> but you shall be put to shame.…
> You shall leave your name to my chosen to use as a curse,
> and the Lord God will put you to death;
> but to his servants he will give a different name.

This is followed by a promise "to create new heavens and a new earth" for "my people," who shall live a utopian existence around God's holy mountain (65:17–25).

That God punishes the Israelites because of their sins and discriminates between the righteous and the wicked—this idea is scarcely novel. But the stark contrast between God's "servants" and the people as a whole; the prophet's satisfaction that the mass of the people will be destroyed because of their wickedness; the virulent condemnation of the people by the prophet; the implication that God's "servants" and "chosen" are not merely a status but a group; and the idea that the future will vindicate the claims of the righteous against the wicked—all of this is new, and all of this anticipates the perspective of later sectarianism. (It is no surprise, therefore, that this chapter is frequently cited or alluded to in the Qumran scrolls and in early Christianity, as in Rom. 10:20–21.) God is angry at his people, who are no longer called by his name, the name chosen by him, because they refuse to heed his message. Only his servants, the chosen ones, will receive his blessings and be vindicated in the (near) future.

The issues that agitated the author of this chapter, and the extent to which the "servants" and the "chosen" formed a distinct group, cannot be determined with any certainty. Several scholars have suggested that Third Isaiah was a member of a prophetic "school" that advanced a program for the

Jerusalem temple and the restoration community of the Persian period that was rejected by the priesthood. The repeated emphasis on the openness of the temple to gentiles (Isa. 56:6–7; 60:1–14; 66:12–24) suggests that this was an issue over which the "school" and the community differed. Ezra and Nehemiah complained that the priests of the temple were too inclusive in allowing gentiles to marry Jews and enter the holy precincts; the group represented by Third Isaiah complained that the priests of the temple were too exclusive in prohibiting gentiles from serving the Lord in his temple. After being rejected by the priests, the prophetic school predicted the destruction of the larger community and dreamed of the time when this prophetic school would be rewarded by God.

Thus the Persian period provides three good examples of protosectarianism. The "congregation of the exile" and the "covenanters" of Nehemiah 10 anticipate the strict organization and legal emphases of later sects, while the prophetic school of Isaiah 65 anticipates the later sects' social alienation and eschatological dreaming. All three groups see the temple as the center of their religion but oppose the regime of the priesthood. They assert that they know better than the high priest how to administer the temple and find favor with God. None of these groups fits the definition of sect given above, since we may doubt whether any of them was either highly organized or clearly separate, but each is a harbinger of what is to come.

PHARISEES, SADDUCEES, AND ESSENES

The heyday of Jewish sectarianism was from the middle of the second century BCE to the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. In several passages, Josephus describes the three "schools of thought" found among the Jews at that time, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. The Josephan evidence about these three groups is supplemented by the testimony of the New Testament, the Qumran scrolls, and rabbinic texts. (Philo and one or two pagan writers provide some additional evidence about the Essenes; see below.) I shall survey each body of evidence separately and then present a synthetic portrait of the three groups.

Sources Written in Greek: Josephus

In order to distinguish the Pharisees from the Sadducees, and the two of them from the Essenes, Josephus highlights three areas in which the sects differed from each other. These areas are philosophy, social standing and politics, and way of life.

Philosophy

As we saw in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, Josephus calls the three groups *haireseis*, "schools of thought" or "philosophical schools." Each advocates certain doctrines about fate, free will, and immortality—precisely the questions that should be addressed by philosophical schools. Josephus explicitly compares the Pharisees with the Stoics, the Essenes with the Pythagoreans, and implicitly the Sadducees with the Epicureans.[13] The Sadducees do not allocate "Fate" any role in human affairs, and they deny both immortality of the soul and resurrection; the Essenes ascribe all human actions to the power of Fate and believe in both immortality and resurrection; the Pharisees adopt a middle course, ascribing power to both fate and human free will and believing in immortality and resurrection (but apparently in a way different from the Essenes—this point is not clear).

In all likelihood, as I remarked above, Josephus's presentation of the three groups as "philosophical schools" was for the benefit of his non-Jewish readers, who would have had little interest either in the real Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes or in the issues that divided them. The three schools probably did debate theological and philosophical questions, but we may doubt whether these debates were central to their sectarian identity.

Social Standing and Politics

These schools also engaged in politics. After supporting the Pharisees, John Hyrcanus shifted his allegiance to the Sadducees. On his deathbed, Alexander Jannaeus, who had faced revolt from many quarters of the population, counseled his wife and successor, Salome Alexandra, to befriend the Pharisees "because these men have so much influence with their fellow Jews that they can injure those whom they hate and help those to whom they are friendly; for they have the complete confidence of the masses."[14] Alexandra heeded his advice and gave the Pharisees free rein. They killed many of their opponents, especially the aristocrats who had supported Jannaeus. Salome's son Aristobulus opposed the Pharisees and resented the influence they had over his mother. When Herod came to power, Pollio the Pharisee counseled the people to accept Herod as their leader; as a result, Pollio and the Pharisees, who numbered six thousand, were respected by Herod. Josephus further records that the Pharisees had special influence over the women of Herod's court. The last time the Pharisees appear in a political context is in the year 66 CE, when, just before the outbreak of the revolt, they joined the "principal

13. Josephus on Stoics and Pharisees: *Life* 2 §12; Pythagoreans and Essenes: *Jewish Antiquities* 15.10.4 §371.

14. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 13.15.5 §401.

citizens" and the chief priests in beseeching the revolutionaries not to begin a war that they could not win. Their advice was ignored. During the first year of the war, the Pharisee Simon ben Gamaliel was a member of the revolutionary presidium in Jerusalem, and three other individual Pharisees are mentioned in his company.

Thus "the Pharisees" appear as a "political party" in the time of John Hyrcanus (137–104 BCE), Salome Alexandra (76–67 BCE), Herod the Great (37–4 BCE), and in the first year of the great revolt (66–67 CE). Several politically important individuals from the time of Herod and the outbreak of the great revolt are called Pharisees. The Sadducees, in contrast, appear only once as a political party, when Hyrcanus joins them and abandons the Pharisees, and only one individual is ever called a Sadducee, a high priest of the first century CE. The Essenes never appear as a political group, although individual Essenes are occasionally mentioned. One Essene predicted to his disciples the murder of the brother of Aristobulus (104–103 BCE). Another accurately forecast the career of Herod the Great, and a third interpreted a significant dream of Herod's son after the death of his father. John the Essene led some military campaigns in the early phases of the war of 66–70. Three of these four Essenes, then, were "holy men" or "prophets" rather than politicians.

The Pharisees have "the complete confidence of the masses." This idea is expressed even more strongly in another passage. The Pharisees "are extremely influential among the masses; and all prayers and sacred rites of divine worship are performed according to their exposition. . . . Whenever the Sadducees assume some office, though they submit unwillingly and perforce, yet submit they do to the dictates of the Pharisees, since otherwise the masses would not tolerate them." The Sadducees are supported only by "the people of highest standing."[15] The Pharisees, who in the time of Herod numbered 6,000, are the party of the masses, while the Sadducees are the party of the aristocracy. Thus, according to Josephus, the Pharisees had a great deal of power in Jewish society from the last part of the second century BCE until the outbreak of the great revolt, while the Sadducees did not. It may be significant that these claims of Pharisaic power appear only in the *Jewish Antiquities*, which was completed in 93/4 CE, and not the *Jewish War*, which was completed 10–15 years earlier. The Essenes, who numbered only 4,000, were apparently not a political party at all.

15. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.1.3–4 §§15–17.

Way of Life

In antiquity, philosophical schools were often as conspicuous for the way of life affected by their adherents as for their tenets. In his long descriptions of the Essenes (summarized in chap. 4 above), Josephus emphasizes the ascetic and pietistic character of their communal life. Although he provides no parallel description of the communal life of the Pharisees and Sadducees, Josephus mentions one important point over which the two groups differed:[16]

> The Pharisees handed down to the people certain regulations from the ancestral succession and not recorded in the laws of Moses, for which reason they are rejected by the Sadducean group, who hold that only those regulations should be considered valid which were written [in the Torah], and that those which had been handed down by the fathers need not be observed. And concerning these matters the two parties came to have controversies and serious differences.

Since the Pharisees follow "the tradition of the fathers," they show deference to their elders, while the Sadducees, by contrast, are very argumentative with their teachers. Josephus nowhere gives an example or defines the meaning of "the tradition of the fathers" so that it is difficult to know precisely what is intended. It is most unlikely that the Sadducees followed "only those regulations which were written [in the Torah]," since a life lived in accordance with the written word alone is a life filled with obscurities and contradictions (see the next chapter). It is more likely that Josephus means that the Sadducees had a vigorous approach to the interpretation of the Torah so that they were able to find in it sources for the ancestral traditions. It was this scriptural basis, said the Sadducees, that gave authority to the ancestral practices, not the mere fact that they originated in earlier times. In contrast, the Pharisees had a less expansive view of scriptural interpretation and a higher view of the authority of the ancestors. For the Pharisees, a scriptural "hook" was not necessary for a custom to be authoritative; an ancestral custom was authoritative merely for the fact of being ancestral. Pharisaic loyalty to the "ancestral customs" appears also in the Gospels and in Paul (see below).

If I have explained this much-discussed passage correctly, Josephus is implying that the Sadducees interpreted the Torah in order to find in it bases for the ancestral customs, but that the Pharisees did not. The position of neither the Sadducees nor the Pharisees should be confused with the later rabbinic doctrine of "the Oral Torah," a phrase and a concept that do not appear in any text of the Second Temple period. I shall return to this in chapter 7 below.

16. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 13.10.6 §§297–98.

The Evidence of Josephus

Josephus describes the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes from three different perspectives, but he does not explain how the perspectives are to be fitted together. What is the connection between the fact that the Pharisees attribute power to both fate and free will and the fact that they affirm the validity of the ancestral traditions? What is the connection between either of these facts and the fact that they enjoy the support of the masses but not of the aristocracy? The same problem applies to the description of the Sadducees. Even if these descriptions are accurate, they certainly are not coherent.

Josephus clearly does not regard any of these groups as a sect in the sense given above. Both the *Jewish War* and the *Jewish Antiquities* view the Pharisees as the most prominent of the three groups, but the latter work adds the important claim that the Pharisees are the leaders of the masses, whose support is essential if any government over the Jews is to succeed. The Sadducees were the aristocratic opponents of the Pharisees. The Essenes were a group of religious and philosophic virtuosos, living a utopian life of the sort that would provoke the admiration of Jews and non-Jews alike. Josephus mentions their three-year catechumenate, their oath of loyalty to the group, their separation from their fellow Jews, their emphasis on purity and ablutions; yet he regards them not as a sect but as a pietistic elite.

Sources Written in Greek: The New Testament

The New Testament, especially the Gospels, has abundant material on the Pharisees but little on the Sadducees and nothing on the Essenes. The references can be divided under the same three headings I used when discussing the evidence of Josephus: philosophy, social standing and politics, and way of life.

Philosophy

The Sadducees deny the resurrection of the dead; the Pharisees affirm it. This fact is known both to the Gospels (Matt. 22:23–33 and parallels) and to Acts 23. Acts adds that the Sadducees also say that "there is no angel or spirit," which probably means that heavenly beings do not communicate directly with people (Paul claimed they did). This denial is attested nowhere else. Aside from this, the New Testament has virtually nothing about the theological tenets of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Social Standing and Politics

Josephus explicitly says that the Pharisees have the support of the masses and carry great weight in public religious matters and that the Sadducees are supported by the aristocracy alone. The same point is made implicitly by the New Testament. Although the Sadducees are the party of the high priest and his associates (Acts 4:1; 5:17), the primary targets of the polemic of the Gospels, especially Matthew, are not the Sadducees but the Pharisees. It is they, often in the company of "scribes," who confront Jesus and his disciples and, in return, are severely denounced for their hypocrisy and other sins (Matt. 23):

> The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. They tie up heavy burdens . . . and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and have people call them rabbi. (23:2–7)

The charge of hypocrisy is probably the result of intersectarian polemic, but the passage clearly shows that in the circles that shaped and transmitted the Gospels, especially Matthew, the Pharisees were a prominent, if not the most prominent, Jewish group. Even the Gospel of John, whose favorite appellation for the Jewish authority figures is the term "Jews," frequently uses "Pharisees" as an equivalent (and never mentions scribes[17]).

Thus, according to the New Testament, the Pharisees were a powerful group in Jewish society. The source of their power, however, was not their control of the institutions of the state. That is, both Pharisees and Sadducees sat on the Sanhedrin, but neither group was a political party. Pharisees (and Sadducees) are conspicuously absent from the passion narratives in all four Gospels. The power of the Pharisees was an extension of their piety and knowledge. They sit on the seat of Moses because they are the authentic exponents of Judaism (even if they are alleged not to practice what they preach).

Way of Life

Even if we dismiss, or at least discount, the Gospel accounts of the hypocrisy, ostentatiousness, and greed of the Pharisees, because these charges are

17. Scribes are mentioned in John 8:3, but there is widespread agreement among scholars that John 8 is not an original part of the gospel of John.

the unverified and unverifiable attacks of one Jewish group against its major rival, the Gospels also present some useful data about the way of life that distinguished the Pharisees from their fellow Jews. (Although Jesus warns his followers [Matt. 16:6 KJV] to be wary of the "leaven of the . . . Sadducees" as well as that of the Pharisees, the Gospels have virtually nothing to say about the practices of the Sadducees.)

The Pharisees are known for their dedication to "the tradition of the elders" and for their meticulous observance of the laws. The Pharisaic "tradition of the elders" is attacked by Jesus in Matthew 15 (paralleled by Mark 7). When Paul boasts of his zeal for the ancestral traditions (Gal. 1:14), he is probably boasting of his former Pharisaic piety. That piety included not only loyalty to the tradition but also the punctilious observance of the laws. Within a space of four chapters, the Paul of Acts proclaims three times that he was or still is a Pharisee. One passage refers to the debate between the Pharisees and the Sadducees on the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:6). The other two ignore the Sadducees and boast of Paul's Pharisaic zeal for the law. The first is Acts 22:3:

> I am a Jew, . . . brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to [or: educated in the minutiae of] our ancestral law, being zealous for God, just as all of you are today [or: educated at the feet of Gamaliel, and zealous for the ancestral law of God as you all are this day].

Gamaliel, of course, was a well-known Pharisee (Acts 5:34). The second passage is Acts 26:5: "I have belonged to the strictest sect [*hairesis*] of our religion and lived as a Pharisee." These boasts are confirmed by the Paul of the Epistles, who rehearses his qualifications: "circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel; . . . as to the law, a Pharisee; . . . as to righteousness under the law, blameless" (Phil. 3:5–6).

In a few passages in the Gospels, the Pharisees question Jesus about his messianic status, but for the most part they question him or his disciples about their legal practices. The topics of these legal disputes are the Sabbath (plucking grain and healing), purity (washing hands before eating, dining with impure people, purification of utensils), oaths, and divorce. When Jesus counters the Pharisees, he invariably criticizes their legal practices. Matthew 23:15–26 provides an inventory of Pharisaic practices of which Jesus disapproves: proselytism, distinction between various kinds of oaths, and emphasis on tithes and purifications. Here, then, is a glimpse at some of the laws that compose the "tradition of the elders," which the Pharisees observe so punctiliously.

The Evidence of the New Testament

According to the New Testament, institutional power in Judea in the first century was wielded by high priests, priests, scribes (a group that Josephus all but ignores), and elders. The Essenes apparently are too insignificant to rate even a mention. The Sadducees are a school of thought that denies the resurrection of the dead and is supported by the high priests and the aristocracy. The Pharisees are a much more influential group and are accorded great respect by the masses. They are known for their allegiance to "the tradition of the elders" and their punctilious observance of the law. The laws that were debated between the Pharisees and the followers of Jesus are in large part the same issues that were on the agenda of the followers of Nehemiah: Sabbath, purity (and tithing), and marriage (in this case, divorce). A new feature is the debate concerning the validity of oaths. That the Pharisees (or Sadducees) constituted a sect, there is not the slightest hint.

I have interpreted Jesus' attack on the Pharisees' hypocrisy and practices as the consequence of intense rivalry and disagreement between the Pharisees and the early followers of Jesus, who transmitted (invented?) and edited these sayings and stories. Some scholars have suggested that the Christian polemic is the result not so much of sectarian competition as of the hostility that the masses often feel toward their authority figures. There is probably some truth to this view as well, which results in a paradox widely attested in the history of religions. The religious elite is both revered and despised, honored and disobeyed by the masses. Rabbinic texts show that many Jews had this oxymoronic attitude toward the rabbis of the second and third centuries (see chap. 7), and the New Testament suggests that some Jews already had this attitude toward the Pharisees in the first century.

Sources Written in Hebrew: Qumran Scrolls

The Works in the Qumran Library

The scrolls discovered in the Judean desert (also known as the Dead Sea Scrolls) are at once the richest and the most puzzling sources for ancient Jewish sectarianism. The scrolls were discovered in caves near a settlement at Khirbet Qumran (hence the name Qumran scrolls). Pottery fragments link the scrolls found in the caves to the settlement so that the vast majority of scholars agree that the scrolls constitute the library of the group that lived in the settlement and that some of the scrolls were actually written at Qumran.

What is the origin of the literature preserved by the scrolls? This question is much more difficult. The library contains (1) works, of whatever origin,

that were widely read and widely available in Jewish society; (2) works that originated in esoteric, pietistic, or sectarian circles outside of Qumran; and (3) works that were the product of the Qumran sect itself. I think that all scholars would accept this tripartite classification but would debate which works belong in category 2 and which in category 3. The simplest to identify is category 1, which includes books of what we call the Bible (in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek) and works like Tobit and Ben Sira. These works were read at Qumran, not composed there; numerous copies of Leviticus and Isaiah, for example, have been found among the Qumran scrolls, but no one will argue on that basis that these works must have been composed by the Jews of Qumran! *Jubilees*, *Testament of Levi*, and *Enoch* probably belong to category 2: they appear to be esoteric works but give no indication of their origins and, in all likelihood, were not composed at Qumran (or if they were composed at Qumran, do not reflect the distinctive history and ideology of the group). Category 3 in turn consists of two types of works. Some works composed at Qumran reflect the distinctive history and ideology of the Qumran group and have a marked sectarian character. The *Rule of the Community* (also called the *Manual of Discipline*), the *Damascus Covenant*, the *War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness*, the commentaries on Nahum (*Nahum Pesher*) and on Habakkuk (*Habakkuk Pesher*)—all these works reflect a strong sense of contrast between members of the group and outsiders, even if they disagree on other matters. But other works, like the *Temple Scroll*, the *Thanksgiving Hymns* (*Hodayot*), and the *Angelic Liturgy* (*Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*), which fit Qumranic theology and practice so well that they probably are of Qumranic origin, reflect no sectarian self-consciousness at all.

There is still much debate about the contours of the works that belong in categories 2 and 3. A more precise identification of the origins of the works that belong in category 2 would greatly illuminate the relations of the Qumran sectarians to their predecessors in the third century BCE (when the book of *Enoch* was written). A more precise identification of the two different types of works that belong to category 3 would greatly illuminate the history of the sect. Perhaps the works that show a marked sectarian self-consciousness are later than those that do not, or perhaps their intended audiences are different. (One scholar has argued that the *Damascus Covenant* contains within it the remains of a "missionary" work designed to convince other Jews to join the sect.) These questions are the subject of current research. In chapter 3, I cited several Qumran texts in order to illustrate the Jewish religion of the period; in chapter 4, I described the social organization of the Qumran community. Here I focus on the connections between the Essenes and the Qumran scrolls.

Qumran and the Essenes

The group that produced the *Rule of the Community* (also called the *Manual of Discipline*) shares many features with the Essenes described by Josephus and Philo: commonality of property, a three-year probationary period, an oath at initiation, sacred meals, an emphasis on purity (including the wearing of white garments), strict organization and discipline, celibacy, and belief in predestination. It is likely, therefore, that the *Rule of the Community* represents the Essenes, and the numerous links between that document and other Qumran texts make it likely that the Qumran community was a community of Essenes. This identification will explain some of the marked contrasts between Qumran documents. The *Rule of the Community* envisions a society of celibate men living in isolation from their fellow Jews, while the *Damascus Covenant* envisions a community of men, women, and children living among Jews (and gentiles!) who are not members of the group. Similarly, in the utopian society envisioned by the *Temple Scroll*, women may live in the cities throughout the country but not in the temple city, which they may visit but not inhabit. No sexual relations are permitted in the temple city. Josephus and Philo state that the Essenes lived throughout the country, but two pagan authors of the first century of our era place the Essenes near the Dead Sea, at precisely the location of Qumran.[18] After mentioning that the Essenes are celibate, Josephus remarks that some Essenes do marry in order to procreate. Thus, according to both the Qumran scrolls and the historical record, some sectarians were celibate, others not; some lived in isolation near the Dead Sea, others not.

The Jews of Qumran Were Essenes

The "sectarian" scrolls of the Qumran library also show that Josephus and Philo omit many essential characteristics of the group, not least of which is its sectarian nature. The Qumran group celebrated its festivals according to a solar calendar of 364 days, while the rest of the Jews followed a lunisolar calendar[19] of approximately 354 days. (Some scholars have argued that the Qumran scrolls testify to several different solar calendars.) The group

18. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 5.73, in Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1974–84), 1:472, no. 204; Dio Chrysostom, in Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1:539, no. 251.

19. A lunisolar calendar determines the month by the moon (so that the beginning of the month coincides with new moon, and the middle of the month with full moon), and the year by the sun (so that Passover, a spring festival, always is celebrated in the spring, and Sukkot, a fall festival, is always celebrated in the fall). Twelve lunar months are 354 days, but an extra month is intercalated every third year or so to keep the calendar seasonally adjusted.

denounced its fellow Jews as sinners and "sons of darkness," strengthening its dualistic social perspective with a dualistic theology. Living in a period when sin was triumphant, the Qumran Jews regarded the Jerusalem temple as polluted and its priesthood as sinful. In the end of days, the world would be purged of evil, the sinners would be destroyed, a new temple would be built, and the sect would rise to glory. In the interim, the sect itself was a surrogate temple and its liturgy a surrogate sacrifice. The group, unlike the Jerusalem temple, was led by true priests, the sons of Zadok. All of these features are omitted in whole or in part by Philo and Josephus. The only clue that the Essenes may have been a sect is Josephus's remark that "although they send votive offerings to the temple, they do not offer sacrifices [there], because of the difference in the purity regulations which they practice. For this reason they are barred from [or: they avoid] the temple precincts of the community and perform their rites [or: sacrifices] by themselves."[20] The Greek of this passage is very difficult, perhaps corrupt, but this is the closest that Josephus comes to noticing the separation and exclusivism that characterized the Essene worldview.

The Evidence of the Qumran Scrolls

The sectarian scrolls of Qumran well illustrate the three focal points of sectarian dispute discussed in the earlier part of this chapter. The Essenes attacked the legal practices of their fellow Jews (esp. their observance of the laws governing marriage; Sabbath, festivals, and calendar; and purity), denied the sanctity of the Jerusalem temple, and interpreted the Bible in their own peculiar fashion (and accepted as authoritative certain books known only to themselves). Some of their biblical commentaries, notably the commentary on Nahum, give a history of the group, but the history is in code. The cast of characters includes "the Wicked Priest," "the Teacher of Righteousness," "the Lion of Wrath," and "the Seekers after Smooth Things." Scholars have labored long and hard to attach names to these phrases (thus "the Wicked Priest" is, perhaps, Jonathan the Hasmonean; "the Lion of Wrath" is Alexander Jannaeus; "the Seekers after Smooth Things" are the Pharisees), but this problem is best left to the cryptanalysts of the CIA. The "Teacher of Righteousness" (or "Righteous Teacher," as some scholars would have it), who is mentioned in some of the scrolls seems to be the title of the group's founder. Unfortunately, little hard data is given about either the Teacher or his archenemy, the Wicked Priest. The crucial point, which is not explained anywhere in the Qumran scrolls, is why the group felt that it had to secede from the rest of society. The attacks on the temple and on the legal practices

20. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.1.5 §19.

of their coreligionists mask the real source of alienation, which is never explicitly mentioned.

Last, sectarians do not see themselves as sectarians, and the Jews of Qumran never refer to themselves as "Essenes" or "Essaeans." They are the chosen of God, the elect of God, the community, the many, the community of God, the repenters of Israel, the members of the covenant, the members of the new covenant, Judah, Israel, and so on, but not "Essenes." (The meaning of the name "Essene" is unknown, as I shall discuss below.) But the Jews of Qumran certainly were a sect in the sense described above, and that important fact, hidden by Josephus and Philo, is clearly revealed in the Qumran scrolls.

Sources Written in Hebrew: Rabbinic Texts

Like the Essenes of Qumran, the group that produced the Mishnah and related works does not give itself an identifying label. Rabbinic texts refer to Pharisees, Sadducees, and assorted other groups (but never to Essenes), but at no point do the rabbis explicitly declare that they are, or regard themselves as, the descendants of this or that group of Second Temple times, and at no point do they refer to any named individual as "X the Pharisee" or "Y the Sadducee." Nevertheless, virtually all scholars see the rabbis as the descendants of the Pharisees. Like the Pharisees described by Josephus and the New Testament, the rabbis are loyal to the "ancestral tradition" (sometimes called the "Oral Torah") and are punctilious about the observance of the commandments, notably the laws regulating purity, Sabbath, festivals, and marriage. They believe in resurrection and in a combination of predestination and free will. The rabbis claim to be (and to have been) the leaders of the masses, and they look on the Pharisees of the Second Temple period as their heroes. The house of Gamaliel, known from Josephus and the New Testament to be Pharisaic, assumed the leadership of the rabbis around the year 100 CE. Therefore, the pre-70 Pharisees must have had some intimate connection with the post-70 rabbis, but this connection does not mean that the two groups were identical in all respects or that the rabbinic group consisted of Pharisees alone.

The rabbinic evidence about the Pharisees and Sadducees is of two sorts. The first consists of texts that explicitly refer to either of these two groups; the second consists of texts that describe the conditions of the Second Temple period or attribute sayings to people who lived at that time. I shall survey each of these in turn.

Explicit Evidence: Pharisees versus Sadducees

In rabbinic Hebrew, the word *parush* (pl. *perushim*), whose literal meaning is "separatist," often is used with a negative valence. For example, the liturgical

condemnation of heretics, mentioned briefly in chapter 4 and to be discussed again in chapters 7 and 8, is called in one rabbinic document "the blessing against separatists [*perushim*]."[21] Occasionally the word appears with the meaning "pietist" yet without negative overtones. In other passages, however, *perushim* is used as the name of a group, the group that Josephus and the New Testament call Pharisees. Here is an excerpt from the chief Mishnaic passage about Pharisees and Sadducees:[22]

> The Sadducees say, We cry out against you, Pharisees, for you say the Holy Scriptures render the hands impure but the writings of Homer do not render the hands impure. . . .
>
> The Sadducees say, We cry out against you, Pharisees, for you declare pure an unbroken stream of liquid [which connects a pure vessel to an impure]. The Pharisees say, We cry out against you, Sadducees, for you declare pure a channel of water which flows from a burial ground.
>
> The Sadducees say, We cry out against you, Pharisees, for you say, "If my ox or my ass have done an injury, I [the owner] am culpable, but if my bondman or bondwoman have done an injury, I [the owner] am not culpable."

This passage (as well as related ones) illustrates the rabbinic perspectives on the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

1. The position attributed to the Pharisees is always that of the rabbis themselves. In these debates, the Pharisees are always the victors, the Sadducees always the losers.

2. The topics of debate are always legal, sometimes (as here) of the most technical sort, and for the most part center on temple cult and purity. Nowhere do the rabbinic texts posit a fundamental principle that separates the two groups; they do not even support Josephus's contention that the Sadducees deny the ancestral traditions affirmed by the Pharisees. One rabbinic passage, which purports to give a history of the origins of the Sadducees and Boethusians (a mysterious group mentioned only in rabbinic literature), asserts that these groups "broke away from the Torah" because they erroneously concluded that there is no reward and punishment in the next world and no resurrection of the dead.[23] The perspective of this passage is close to that of the New Testament, which sees the Sadducees primarily as a philosophical

21. *T. Berakhot* 3.25, p. 18.

22. *M. Yadayim* 4:6–7.

23. *Avot of Rabbi Nathan*, version A chap. 5 (see Judah Goldin, *The Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1955], 39), or version B chap. 10 (see Anthony Saldarini, *The Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975], 85–86).

school that denies immortality and resurrection; but everywhere else the rabbis see not theology but law as the focal point of the disputes between the groups. The "Sadducees" who participate in some of these legal debates are not always the priestly aristocrats known to the Greek sources but sometimes are the Zadokite priests of the Qumran community (see below).

3. The Pharisees are not a sect but the exponents of authentic Judaism to whom even the Sadducees (and the Boethusians) must yield. Public rituals in the temple were performed in such a way as to flout the rulings of the Sadducees and the Boethusians. Three stories tell of the deaths of high priests (in two cases by supernatural means, in one by an angry mob) who refused to follow the practices enjoined by the rabbis/Pharisees and endorsed by the masses.[24] Thus the rabbis confirm the report of Josephus: the Sadducees are powerless because they must submit to the rulings of the Pharisees. (But the rabbis go even further than Josephus. They claim that the Sanhedrin was constituted of, and controlled by, rabbinic sages, whereas the New Testament and Josephus say that it was constituted of members of diverse groups and controlled by the high priests.)

Implicit Evidence: The Rabbinic Version of the Past

The Mishnaic tractate *Fathers* opens with a chain of tradition that links Moses to the rabbis of the second and third centuries. Rabbinic tradition was transmitted through the generations from masters to disciples. The first master was God, and the first disciple was Moses. In turn, Moses was Joshua's teacher, and so on. Since the Mishnah regards rabbinic Judaism as the only authentic form of Judaism that ever existed, it imagines that it had proponents in every generation and that these proponents were the nation's leaders. The Mishnah (and rabbinic tradition generally) knows very little about the prerabbinic sages who are alleged to have lived during the Second Temple period. Some of them, notably Hillel and Shammai (approximately the time of Herod), are the heroes of anecdotes of dubious historicity; but none of them, not even Hillel and Shammai, figures prominently in the legal tradition that forms the core of the Mishnah. Hillel, Shammai, and all the rest are disembodied names whose function is to bridge the gap between the prophets of the Bible and the rabbis of the Mishnah. Although no rabbinic text ever calls any of these people Pharisees, it is striking that some of the individual Pharisees who appear on the pages of Josephus and the New Testament can be identified with links in the rabbinic chain of tradition. The Pharisee Gamaliel known to the New

24. *T. Yoma* (or *Kippurim*) 1.8, p. 222; *t. Sukkah* 3.16, p. 270; and *t. Parah* 3.8, p. 632, in the edition of M. S. Zuckermandel.

Testament and the Pharisee Simon ben Gamaliel known to Josephus are certainly identical with the rabbinic figures of the same names.

If the individuals of the pre-70 period are bare names for the Mishnah, the "house of Hillel" and the "house of Shammai" are substantial entities that are cited frequently. The word "house" is probably the equivalent of "school," although no rabbinic text describes the social organization behind this term. The two houses are cited numerous times in the Mishnah, almost always in tandem and almost always in debate. The major focal points of the debates between the houses were the laws of purity, Sabbath, festivals, and table fellowship: What is the proper procedure for the eating of a meal? Which blessings must be recited and in what order? What are the rules of etiquette that must be observed? How should the purity rules be implemented during a meal? In all these matters, if the house of Shammai says "impure" or "forbidden," the house of Hillel can be counted on to say "pure" or "permitted."

Most scholars view the two houses as wings or factions of the Pharisees, because the profile of their interests is consistent with what is known elsewhere of the Pharisees specifically and of Jewish sects generally (with the notable addition of table fellowship and near omission of temple law). But the very identity of these interests is a serious problem, for how can the Pharisees disagree among themselves on the same issues over which sects disagree? If the Pharisees reject the purity rules of the Sadducees, how can the house of Hillel reject the purity rules of the house of Shammai without engendering further sectarian division? The Mishnah assures us that the houses did not split into separate factions:[25]

> Although these forbid what the others permit, and these declare ineligible [for marriage] those whom the others declare eligible, yet [the men of] the house of Shammai did not refrain from marrying women from the house of Hillel, nor did [the men of] the house of Hillel refrain from marrying women from the house of Shammai. Despite all the disputes about what is pure and impure, wherein these declare pure what the others declare impure, neither refrained from using anything that pertained to the others in matters concerned with purity.

Although each of the houses advanced its own marriage and purity laws, nevertheless, the Mishnah insists, they lived together as one big happy family. How were the houses able to accomplish this? Why did the disputes between the Pharisees and the Sadducees create social barriers while those between the houses did not? What was the relationship between the houses and the Pharisees? None of these questions is addressed, much less answered, by the

25. *M. Yevamot* 1:4.

Mishnah or any other rabbinic text. Rather than endorse the oft-repeated assertion that the Pharisees consisted of two schools or wings, one progressive or liberal (the house of Hillel) and the other conservative or strict (the house of Shammai), I prefer to admit ignorance. We know neither the social reality that the houses represent nor the relationship of the houses to the Pharisees.

The Rabbinic Evidence

The rabbis of the second century and later did not look upon themselves as members of a sect, either because they were not or because members of a sect never see themselves for what they really are. Nor did the rabbis see their ancestors as sectarians but as the legitimate leaders of the Jewish people and as the exponents of authentic Judaism. The *haverim*, "associates," the group of pietists who carefully observed the laws of tithing and purity (see chap. 4), is nowhere in rabbinic tradition connected with the Pharisees or regarded as a sect-like organization. The Sadducees and the Boethusians "break away from the Torah" and debate the rabbis on various legal matters, mostly concerning purity and temple cult, but have little impact because they flail helplessly against the masses and their leaders, the rabbis. In the debates with the Sadducees and the Boethusians, the Pharisees represent the position that the rabbis themselves accept as correct. To some extent, therefore, the rabbis identify themselves with the Pharisees of Second Temple times. This identification is confirmed by implicit evidence (the rabbis of the Mishnah have many features in common with the Pharisees described by Josephus and the New Testament) and by the prominence in both traditions of Gamaliel and his son.

If the rabbis really were the descendants of the Pharisees, it is remarkable that they know (or choose to reveal) so little information about their ancestors. Few legal opinions and few narratives of any historical value are attributed by rabbinic tradition to the individual masters of the Second Temple period. Virtually all modern scholars agree that much of rabbinic Judaism derives from Second Temple times, but the rabbis are not interested in documenting this fact. Only the houses of Hillel and Shammai are cited abundantly, and these shadowy groups debate primarily the laws pertaining to purity, Sabbath and festivals, and meals.

The Names of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes

The names of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes provide only slight additional evidence. Practically all scholars now agree that the name "Pharisee" derives from the Hebrew and Aramaic *parush* or *perushi* (in the plural, *perushim*), which means "one who is separated," but whether the separation is from the gentiles (as Ezra and Nehemiah speak of those who "separated

themselves from the pollutions of the nations of the lands" [e.g., Ezra 6:21; cf. 1 Macc. 1:11]), from sources of ritual impurity, or from irreligious Jews is not as clear. It is likely that the term was first used by the group's opponents in order to denigrate it ("Separatists!" they cried) and that it never became part of the group's self-definition. At least it never so appears in the Mishnah or in the bulk of rabbinic tradition.

Most scholars now agree that the name "Sadducee" derives from the Hebrew *Zeduqi* and means "a descendant [or: adherent] of Zadok the priest." "The priests the sons of Zadok" is a regular turn of phrase in the last chapters of Ezekiel (e.g., 44:15 AT). Presumably this is a self-designation. Sadducees see themselves as the descendants of Zadok the priest, that is, as the true priests who are to officiate in the temple. Two different groups of Zadokites are known. The first is the Qumran community, which accorded prominence and power to the priests the sons of Zadok. The second is the aristocratic and priestly social stratum called "Sadducees" by Josephus and the New Testament. Some of the rabbinic texts that mention Sadducees seem to refer to the aristocratic priests of the Greek sources, while others seem to refer to the sectarian pietists of Qumran. For example, the Sadducees who argue in the Mishnah (quoted above) that impurity can be transferred through an unbroken stream of liquid are the Zadokite priests of the Qumran community. The rabbinic texts do not distinguish between different types of Sadducees, but the Qumran texts allow this point to be established with some certainty. (The same ambiguity is true of the Boethusians, a group known only from rabbinic texts. In some contexts they are an aristocratic priestly group like the Sadducees; in others they are extreme pietists whose practices are identical with those of the Qumran sect.)

The name of the Essenes, like the group itself, remains mysterious. Since it does not appear in any Hebrew source, its original pronunciation and even its original language (is it Greek, Aramaic, or Hebrew?) are unknown. Philo and Josephus transcribe the name either as "Essene" or as "Essaean," and the guesses by modern scholars include "pious ones," "healers," and others. Etymology and meaning remain disputed.

SUMMARY: FROM THE PERSIAN PERIOD TO PHARISEES, SADDUCEES, AND ESSENES

After its reconstruction in the Persian period, the temple became not only the center of worship in Judea but also the center of society. The priests were not only the ministers in the temple but also the official leaders of the Jews. But the temple's new status was offset by the sense that it was not as authentic

as the one built by Solomon. The priests' new status was offset by the sense that they were not sufficiently pious. The dissonance between social reality and religious perception gave impetus to the rise of sect-like groups that affirmed the validity of the priests and the temple but tried to supplement them or control them. "The congregation of the exile" and the covenanters of Nehemiah 10 supported the temple but subjugated priestly authority to their own. They taught the Torah in public, adopted marriage laws much stricter than those followed by the priests, and observed the laws of purity and tithing in accordance with their own interpretations. These Jews probably justified their actions by appeal to their superior erudition and piety. Ezra was a scribe learned in the Torah and therefore was the ultimate authority for his supporters. Another group, the prophetic school of Third Isaiah, was equally disenchanted with the ways of the priests and the restoration community, but instead of attacking the political hegemony of the priests, dreamed of the day when a new creation would dawn, the temple in Jerusalem would become a true house of God for all peoples, and the chosen ones (the members of the community) would finally be vindicated.

What happened to these groups in the Hellenistic period is not known. The high priests of Jerusalem were still very much in control, but the democratization of religion (discussed in chap. 3) proceeded apace. Prayer, Torah study, the daily performance of the commandments, the promise of individual reward in the hereafter—all these became the distinguishing characteristics of Judaism, and all these minimize, or at least reduce, the centrality of the temple and the priesthood. The third century BCE witnessed the emergence of the scribes, a group of laypeople learned in the sacred writings, although their precise social function is obscure. The dual result of this process was the creation of new social organizations (synagogues and sects) that took the place of the temple, and new social elites (teachers, sages, and rabbis) who took the place of the priests. Synagogues appear in Egypt in the third century BCE, in the land of Israel in the first century BCE or CE. Sects emerge in the Maccabean period.

The desecration of the temple and the persecution of Judaism by Epiphanes, the overt corruption of the high priesthood, the Maccabean revolt and the reclamation of the temple through force of arms, and the usurpation of the high priesthood by Jonathan the Hasmonean—all highlighted the problematic status of the temple. Was it legitimate? Was it the real house of God? Even if the temple had been legitimate before, how could one be sure that its purification was efficacious in the eyes of God? The dissonance between the real and the perceived was greater now than before. Through vigorous propaganda, the Maccabees sought to legitimate both themselves and the temple they had regained, but many Jews were not convinced. Those who were least convinced formed sects.

The first such group was the *Hasidim*, "the pious ones," who supported the Maccabees in their struggle against Epiphanes and the corrupt priests of Jerusalem ("Hasideans," 1 Macc. 2:42). After the great victory and the rededication of the temple, they ceased to fight the Seleucids because they had no desire to further the dynastic pretensions of the Maccabees (1 Macc. 7:12–13). These are virtually all the known facts about the Hasidim.[26] Many modern scholars have suggested that the Hasidim were the ancestors of both the Pharisees and the Essenes, but the suggestion lacks any supporting evidence. Even if it were true, it would not help much because so little is known of this group. Whether or not it was a sect is unknown.

Josephus refers to the three sects for the first time during the reign of Jonathan (ca. 152–143 BCE), who had been appointed high priest by one of the pretenders to the Seleucid throne, and archaeology confirms that the Qumran community was founded in the middle of the second century BCE. At this early stage, prominent among the Essenes were "the priests the sons of Zadok," that is, "true" and "legitimate" priests. They complained that, among other things, the temple was polluted, the temple priests were illegitimate, the temple cult was not conducted in accordance with the correct calendar or the correct purity laws, and the Jews were not observing the Sabbath properly. They believed that they were living in a time of wrath, when the forces of evil were ascendant, but that at some point in the near future the forces of light would triumph and the sect would conquer its enemies. Some of the less extreme of their number lived among the larger community, raising families and remaining involved in the affairs of the world. The more rigorous ones dwelt in isolation; avoided contact with women, gentiles, and nonsectarian Jews (all of them sources of impurity); read, composed, copied, and studied a wide variety of works, both esoteric and exoteric; and joined their prayers to those of the angels while they awaited the great war. The end of the Qumran community did come in a great war, but probably not in a way imagined by the Essenes. In 68 CE, the community was destroyed by the Romans.

Other Zadokite priests were probably the ancestors of the group known in the first century as Sadducees. Their history is most obscure. For Josephus and the New Testament, the Sadducees are high priests and aristocrats who deny the resurrection of the dead. There must have been more to the Sadducees than just this, certainly in the time of their origins, but our sources do not reveal it. Not all priests, high priests, and aristocrats were Sadducees; many were Pharisees, and many were not members of any group at all.

26. Obviously these Hasidim are not necessarily the "pious ones" mentioned in the Psalms (e.g., 149:1, 5, 9) or "the ancient pious ones" mentioned in the Mishnah (e.g., *m. Berakhot* 5:1).

By the first century of our era, the Pharisees were priests and laypeople who believed that the ancestral tradition (not yet defined as the Oral Torah—that would come later in rabbinic times) was as binding as the written Torah of Moses. The ancestral tradition included observance of the purity laws (that is, priestly piety transferred to the laity), tithing (another matter of interest to priests), and numerous details in the laws of oaths, Sabbath, and marriage. According to the New Testament, the Pharisees were closely associated with the scribes, a profession grounded on expertise in the laws. The crucial historical question is the relationship of the Pharisees to general Jewish society. Were they a sect? an elite? a "movement"? an order? Each of these possibilities has been defended by modern scholars. None of the ancient sources views the Pharisees as a sect, and there is no sign that the Pharisees of the first century had that exclusivist ideology, strict organization, and group-oriented eschatology that characterize sects. But the name Pharisee, which means "separatist"; the emphasis on the laws of purity and table fellowship (if indeed the houses of Hillel and Shammai were Pharisees); the rabbinic association of *haverim* (if indeed this is a relic of Pharisaic times); their relatively small numbers (6,000 in the days of Herod)—all these imply that the Pharisees were a distinctive group that abstained from normal social intercourse with other Jews. Perhaps, then, they were pietists who, in order to attain a higher level of purity and religiosity, separated themselves to some extent from their coreligionists, yet saw themselves, and were seen by others, not as exclusive bearers of the truth but as virtuosos and elites.

Of course, the New Testament, Josephus, and rabbinic literature would have us believe even more. The New Testament would have us believe that the Pharisees sat on the seat of Moses, were given seats of honor in synagogues, and were called "rabbi" ("my master") in the streets. Josephus would have us believe that the Sadducees could accomplish nothing because they had perforce to obey the Pharisees. The masses supported the Pharisees to such an extent that anyone who sought to govern the Jews had to obtain the support of the Pharisees. The rabbis would have us believe that wicked high priests who flouted the rulings of the Pharisees were struck dead by God or pelted to death by the masses and that the Pharisees-sages controlled the Sanhedrin and all the trappings of state.

How much truth there is in this portrait of Pharisaic power is an extremely difficult question. On the one hand, all these sources were written after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE and may therefore be projecting the conditions of their own time back upon previous generations. After 70, the sects disappeared and the rabbinic movement, which consisted, at least in part, of the heirs of the Pharisees, emerged. In the *Jewish Antiquities*, completed in 93/94 CE, Josephus emphasizes Pharisaic power, but in the *Jewish War*, completed ten to fifteen years earlier, he does not. Many scholars have argued

that much of the anti-Pharisee polemic of the Gospels appears in post-70 additions to earlier material.[27] Perhaps, then, the unanimous testimony of the three sources tells us much about the post-70 status of the rabbis, the inheritors of the Pharisees, but little about the Pharisees before 70. On the other hand, it is difficult to believe that all three sources, especially Josephus and the New Testament, are inventing features out of whole cloth. Perhaps they are exaggerating, but it is likely that their reports contain at least some truth. The Pharisees must have been an important group even before 70 CE. They did not control the institutions of the state, and their ability to enforce their opinions (their "power") was limited. But they clearly had power in a nonpolitical sense because they were influential and highly respected.

These were the Pharisees of the first century CE. The picture of their ancestors of the second and first centuries BCE is even more blurry. Josephus, who is unaware of the possibility that the sects might have developed in the course of two centuries, presents the Pharisees of the Hasmonean times as identical with those of the first century. They observe the ancestral traditions, are influential with the masses, and so on. The only novelty is their political activism. The Pharisees of the Hasmonean period were active in politics in ways that Roman period Pharisees never were. When given an opportunity, they enforce their ancestral traditions and assassinate or expel their opponents. From the same period, we have the polemic of the Qumran scrolls against "the seekers of smooth things," perhaps the Pharisees, but unfortunately the scrolls are cryptic and provide little hard data. Perhaps the early Pharisees dedicated themselves to the ancestral traditions because they believed that the temple cult alone was no longer adequate, and in the flush of youth tried aggressively to enforce their program on the people. This is the picture suggested by Josephus, but we have no way of knowing whether it is correct.

OTHER SECTS AND GROUPS

I have devoted a great deal of attention (perhaps too much) to the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes because of their prominence in the ancient sources and in modern scholarship. However, Judaism in the period between the Maccabees and the destruction of the temple in 70 CE had many more than three sects or "schools." Josephus himself mentions a "fourth philosophy" and various other revolutionary groups. He also mentions once (unless the passage is an interpolation) "the tribe of Christians." He refers to the Samaritans

27. Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978) 153–57, "The Pharisees in the Gospels."

on many occasions, although never as a "sect" or "school." Philo describes a group of Therapeutae in Egypt. I shall briefly discuss each of these.

Fourth Philosophy, Sicarii, and Zealots

After describing the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, Josephus turns to a fourth school of philosophy. While the first three were legitimate, the fourth, Josephus says, was "intrusive," an "innovation and revolution in the ancestral ways."[28] The basic tenet of this group, which was founded by Judas the Galilean (or the Gaulanite) and Zadok the Pharisee, was "No king but God!" The slogan seems anarchic in character, since it justifies the rejection of all political institutions, but in practice Judas and his followers attacked only Romans and those Jews who supported or cooperated with Roman rule. The group first appeared in 6 CE, when it rebelled against the Romans; the rebellion was crushed (Acts 5:37). For the next generation, Judea was quiet. Even when Caligula threatened to erect a statue in the temple, no rebels were to be seen. But shortly thereafter, the country was overrun by "brigands," and in his narrative of the events from the mid-40s CE to the outbreak of the war in 66, Josephus frequently mentions "brigands" and their deleterious effects. In the 50s CE, a new type of rebel appeared, the Sicarii (lit., "dagger men"), who specialized in mixing with the crowds in Jerusalem and stabbing to death the Jews who supported Roman rule. With the outbreak of the war itself, especially from the summer of 67 CE until the destruction in 70, another name begins to appear on the pages of Josephus, that of the Zealots.

Many scholars have assumed that the "fourth philosophy," the brigands, the Sicarii, and the Zealots were four different names for a single group of revolutionaries. Founded by Judas at the beginning of the first century CE, this group engaged in a continuous struggle against the Romans until the destruction of the temple in 70 and the fall of Masada in 73 or 74. For ease of reference, these scholars used the name "Zealots" as a synonym for "revolutionaries." Other scholars, however, have convincingly rejected this interpretation. The Sicarii probably were the descendants of the "fourth philosophy" founded by Judas, but neither group should be identified with brigands, Zealots, or other groups. Each has its own history.

The Sicarii burst into prominence in the 40s CE, were always an urban phenomenon, and restricted their murderous attacks to their fellow Jews, especially aristocrats and the well-to-do. For a brief period at the beginning of the war, they commanded the revolutionary forces, but then they were ousted from Jerusalem by their fellow Jews. They spent the rest of the war at Masada and, aside

28. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.1.1 §9.

from raiding several Jewish towns for supplies, did nothing to hinder or aid the war effort. In the end, they slew themselves rather than be captured by the Romans. The Zealots, by contrast, first appear (except for three stray references in Josephus) in the events of 67 CE and consisted for the most part of peasants who fled to Jerusalem as the Romans swept southward from Galilee. The Zealots removed the aristocratic high priest and with equal intensity attacked other revolutionary groups, the aristocracy, and the Romans. Unlike the Sicarii and the Zealots, the "brigands" were not a "group" at all. Brigandage was a rural phenomenon found throughout the ancient world and was the consequence of economic stress and social dislocation. Many of the Jewish brigands were anti-Roman because they hated the tax collectors and landlords supported by Rome, but most were not ideologically motivated. Their goal was to make money, and they did not much care whether the travelers and villagers they robbed were Jews or Romans, the supporters of peace or the fomenters of war. Like the word "terrorist" in contemporary political vocabulary, "brigand" is a relative term. One man's "terrorist" or "brigand" is another man's "freedom fighter" or "hero" (cf. Robin Hood). The people whom Josephus and the Romans denounced as "brigands" included real malefactors as well as real revolutionaries.

Sicarii, Zealots, and brigands were not the only revolutionaries who fought the Romans. The first act of rebellion was taken by some of the temple priests, and a priestly revolutionary party played an important role in the first half of the war. (These priests, some of them of the high-priestly line, were the bitter enemies of the Zealots and the Sicarii.) Various noblemen joined in, each with his own band of retainers and supporters. A group of Jews from Idumea, the birthplace of Herod the Great, supported the Zealots for a while in their battle against the high priests and the aristocrats. In sum, the war was fought by a wide variety of groups and parties whose animosity for one another often surpassed their collective animosity for the Romans.

Were any of these groups sects? Clearly the question is relevant only to the more highly organized groups, notably the Sicarii. The evidence is insufficient to answer the question. We may be sure that the revolutionaries in general and the Sicarii in particular were motivated by religious goals (e.g., to hasten or implement the arrival of the messianic age; to fight for God and Torah; to rid the Holy Land of foreign contagion; to be zealous for the Torah of God); yet Josephus, because he cannot admit the possibility that revolution against Rome is a legitimate expression of Judaism, denies the fact. The slogan "No king but God!" must be the summary of a well-developed religious program. But even if the stated goals of the revolutionaries were religious in nature, there is little evidence that the competing revolutionary groups represent competing sectarian ideologies. Furthermore, it is likely that the real causes of the war lie elsewhere entirely. The war of 66–70 is a classic example

of a social revolution that is also a native revolt against an imperialist power. It follows standard patterns and is not a uniquely Jewish phenomenon (see chap. 2). Jewish sectarianism probably did not play a dominant role.

Christians

This is not the place for a full discussion of the separation of early Christianity from Judaism; in chapter 8 below, I shall discuss some of the main issues and main texts. Here I am interested only in pointing to certain features that clearly locate early Christianity (the postresurrection community) within the world of Jewish sectarianism.

The Christian community described in the opening chapters of Acts is a sect in the sense of being "a small organized group that has separated itself from a larger religious body." The twelve apostles control the group, property is held in common, disbursements are made to the faithful from the common till, and disobedience to one's superiors is not tolerated (Acts 5:1–11). The group dines and prays together. New members are "converted" through baptism and repentance (2:38–42). Like the Essenes, the early Christians tried to create a utopian community (and like Josephus's and Philo's portrait of the Essenes, Luke's portrait of the early Christians is highly idealized). A sense of alienation from the rest of society is apparent in the numerous calls for repentance and in the eschatological fervor of the group. (Other works in the New Testament canon, notably Ephesians and Colossians, have a dualistic view of the cosmic order, similar to that of the Qumran Essenes.) The leaders of the group reject priestly authority, and although some of the Christians maintain their veneration for the temple (Acts 3:1), others vehemently reject it, forecasting its destruction (Acts 6–7).

One of the central themes of the book of Acts is that Christianity is a legitimate development of Judaism and that the Jews of that time (and later) were wrong to reject it. But because the focus shifts quickly to the gentile mission (Acts 10–11), Luke never explains in detail the relationship of the new form of Judaism, known as Christianity ("Christians," Acts 11:26), to the old. In Galatians and Romans, Paul addresses this question, but the two epistles do not agree (Galatians is a much more radical rejection of Judaism than is Romans). During the past fifty years, with the rise of ecumenism and the increased desire to free the New Testament of any charge of "anti-Semitism," many scholars have emphasized that Paul's rejection of Jewish law and, to some extent, of Judaism itself is directed to a *gentile* audience. Paul, these scholars argue, objected if a gentile wished to subject himself to the Jewish laws but had no objection if a native-born Jew wished to continue observing the laws after receiving faith in Christ. Many of these scholars further argue that Paul

does not appropriate the title "Israel" for the gentile Christians alone, but includes within this concept the Jews as well, Israel after the flesh. A similar interpretation of Paul was already advanced by the book of Acts, since the Paul of Acts never polemicizes against the law and often observes the requirements of Jewish ritual, including circumcision (Acts 16:3).

Even if this interpretation of Paul is correct, the fact remains that Paul believes, both in the Epistles and in Acts, that the only true expression of Judaism includes faith in Christ, that is, (what will become and what will come to be called) Christianity. This is implied, too, in Luke's portrait of the first Christians. Faith in Christ was not to be an act of pietism for an elite but was to be the new norm for Judaism. Those Jews who do not accept Christ are sinners. If this is not a sectarian perspective, it certainly is very close to it.

Belief in Jesus' resurrection and status as Messiah was the focal point for the differentiation between Christian and non-Christian Jews. The failure of the larger Jewish community to realize the importance of the person who had just ascended to heaven caused the group of believers to feel alienated from the larger community. Throughout this chapter I have argued that in ancient Judaism, sectarian alienation, whatever its origin, generally expressed itself in polemics against the central institutions of society (notably the temple), its authority figures (notably the priests), and its religious practices (notably purity, Sabbath, and marriage law). The cutting edge of sectarianism was not theology but practice. Someone in the early community preserved (invented?) the debate stories in which Jesus attacks the religious practices of the Pharisees in precisely these matters, and preserved (invented?) the prophecy of the destruction and the rebuilding of the temple. Faith in Christ surely led the early Christians to distinctive rituals (baptism, Eucharist) and practices (possession by the Spirit, speaking in tongues), and to distinctive interpretations of some of the Jewish observances (the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, prayer). These distinctive and peculiar practices, more than the distinctive and peculiar theology on which the practices were based, made Christianity a sect or at least a separate group within Jewish society.

Early Christianity ceased to be a Jewish sect when it ceased to observe Jewish practices. It abolished circumcision and became a religious movement overwhelmingly gentile in composition and character. This process was accompanied by the elevation of Jesus to a position far higher and more significant than that occupied by any intermediary figure in Judaism; even those Jews who, like Philo, used their belief in God's Logos to explain how a transcendent and unknowable God could create the world and interact with it did not worship the Logos or pray to it. The Logos was simply a philosophical abstraction, a way of understanding the world. For Christians,

however, Christ the Logos was the primary focus of worship. Furthermore, Christians believed that Jesus, born of a mortal mother, had become the Logos incarnate; no other Jewish group is known to have advocated such a theology. With its practices no longer those of the Jews, its theology no longer that of the Jews, its membership no longer Jewish, and its political institutions no longer those of the Jews—the Christianity of the early second century CE was no longer a Jewish phenomenon but a separate religion. Small groups of Jewish Christians (more accurately, Christian Jews) persisted through the first five or six centuries CE, but they were regarded as sects by both the Jews and the Christians. As one fourth-century church father remarked, "They are not Jews because they believe in Christ, and they are not Christians because they observe the Jewish laws."[29] I return to all this in chapter 8 below.

Samaritans

The single best-known fact about the Samaritans is that Jesus mentions a good one (Luke 10:29–37), but the point of that parable is that Jews do not expect to be treated well by Samaritans because neither group regards the other with neighborly feelings. Like the history of early Christianity, the history of the Samaritans is too complex to be treated here in any detail.

First, a note on nomenclature. The name "Samaritan" has two distinct meanings: an inhabitant of the district of Samaria (cf. "Galilean," "Judean," "Idumean") or a member of a religious community centered at Shechem and Mount Gerizim. To reduce the confusion, some scholars restrict the term "Samaritan" to the second sense and use the term "Samarian" in the first. In Greco-Roman times, the city of Samaria, ancient Shomron, the erstwhile capital of the northern kingdom, was a pagan city, and much of the countryside was pagan as well. These pagans hated the Jews to their north and their south, and they were involved in several violent incidents in the first century CE that turned out to be the prelude to the great revolt. The people who concern us here are not these pagans but the community that dwelt (and still dwells) in Shechem and venerated (and still venerates) Mount Gerizim.

The history of the group begins in the last part of the fourth century BCE. After the conquest of the country by Alexander the Great in 334 BCE, the city of Samaria rebelled against Macedonian rule. In retaliation, the city was destroyed, cleared of its former inhabitants, and resettled with pagans. Archaeological evidence suggests that the former inhabitants of Samaria fled

29. Jerome, *Epistles* 112, in Albertus F. J. Klijn and Gerrit J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 201.

to Shechem, where they established themselves. In all likelihood, the temple on Mount Gerizim was now built to serve the new community. The erection of the temple, however, did not signal a break with the Jews of Judea, who venerated the temple in Jerusalem. There was tension, to be sure, between the two communities, but no schism. The alphabet used by the Samaritans and the text form of their Torah were widespread in Judea in the second century BCE. The decrees of Epiphanes applied to the Samaritans as well as to the Judeans, a fact confirming that both groups were Jews in the eyes of the state. Unlike the Jews of Judea, however, the Samaritans accepted the king's program and dedicated their temple to Zeus. Perhaps in revenge for this act, John Hyrcanus destroyed the Gerizim temple in 129 BCE and the city of Shechem in 109 BCE. This caused undying tension between the communities. The Samaritans created their own biblical canon (including only the Torah), developed rituals and practices that in many areas agreed, and in many areas disagreed, with those of their fellow Jews, and elaborated their own eschatology (including the restoration of their temple on Mount Gerizim).

Who were these Samaritans who venerated Mount Gerizim? This was a question of great controversy in antiquity, and it remains unresolved. Josephus says that they are really the descendants of the Cutheans, who had been transferred to the district by the Assyrians and whose syncretistic cult is described in 2 Kings 17 (Josephus and the rabbis often call the Samaritans "Cutheans," *Kutim*). Yet the Cutheans themselves, says Josephus, claim kinship with the Jews whenever it is advantageous for them to do so; they claim to descend from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. He also tells the interesting story that, in the time of Alexander the Great, a brother of the high priest was expelled from Jerusalem because he had married the daughter of Sanballat, governor of Samaria. He fled to his father-in-law after being assured that he would receive a temple of his own. Other priests who had intermarried fled with him. Sanballat obtained permission from Alexander the Great to build the temple on Gerizim. This story implies that the temple on Gerizim, like the temple in Heliopolis in Egypt and like (perhaps) the sect of Qumran Essenes, was founded by runaway priests from Jerusalem. In Hellenistic times the Samaritans called themselves "the Sidonians who live in Shechem," that is, the offspring of Canaanites and Phoenicians. In a medieval work, the Samaritans argue that only they are the true Israel because all the rest of Israel sinned when, under the leadership of the wicked priest Eli (1 Sam. 1–4), they abandoned Shechem and Gerizim in order to worship at Shiloh and later at Jerusalem.[30]

30. Samaritans claim to descend from the tribes of Joseph: Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 9.14.3 §291. Alexander the Great and Sanballat: Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*

Were the Samaritans a sect? On the one hand, they have many sectarian features. As long as their temple stood on Mount Gerizim, they seem to have regarded themselves as part of the larger community of the worshipers of the God of Israel, but after their temple was destroyed, they argued that the Jerusalem temple was completely unacceptable to God because it was built on the wrong place and that a new and true temple would someday be rebuilt on Gerizim. We may presume that they also delegitimized the Jerusalemite priesthood. In sum, they looked upon themselves as the true Israel. On the other hand, the Samaritans have many features that are decidedly nonsectarian: their mixed origins, their ethnic ties to Shechem and Mount Gerizim, and their widespread Diaspora, which has been estimated by some scholars to rival that of the Jews. Sect or no, the Samaritans were a distinctive group or community that gradually emerged during the Second Temple period. Scholars now agree that the separation between the Jews and the Samaritans, like the separation between Judaism and Christianity, was not an event but a protracted process.

Therapeutae

Jewish sectarianism was a phenomenon restricted to the mother country. Alienation from the temple and the priests was required if sectarianism was to have a focus, but outside the land of Israel that focus did not exist because all Jews were equally distant from the Holy Land and from contact with the sacred. All the sources that speak about the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and other sects place them exclusively (except for occasional refugees from war or persecution) in the land of Israel, for the most part in Judea. (Paul became a Pharisee and studied with Gamaliel in Israel, not Tarsus.) The sole exception (aside from early Christianity) is a group described by Philo, the *Therapeutae* (Greek for "healers" or "worshipers").[31] In chapter 3 I briefly discussed the prominence of women in Philo's description of the group; here I turn to the group as a whole.

The Therapeutae were an Essene-like group that was scattered throughout Egypt and consisted of both men and women. They abstained from marriage, practiced moderation and self-mastery, and ate, prayed, and studied communally. Every morning they prayed, and on Sabbaths and holidays they held more elaborate services that featured the singing of hymns, a communal

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11 end. "The Sidonians who live in Shechem": Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 12.5.5 §§258–60. Medieval work: Samaritan Chronicle II, summarized by Richard J. Coggins, *Samaritans and Jews* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 117–31.

31. Philo, *On the Contemplative Life*.

dinner, an ecstatic dance, and the study of Scripture. The members were classified according to seniority, with the junior always deferring to the senior. They devoted their entire existence to the contemplation of God and truth. In various details the Therapeutae differ from the Essenes (the Therapeutae do not eat meat or drink wine, but the Essenes do; the Therapeutae engage in daily fasts, but the Essenes do not; the Therapeutae include men and women in their rituals, but the Essenes have men only), but the overall resemblance of the two groups is striking.

At the very least, then, the Therapeutae were a pietistic group in Egypt that in some important ways resembled the Essenes. Its existence shows that the impulse to flee the world in order to pursue a life of holiness was to be found among Jews not only in the land of Israel but also in the Diaspora, but there is no hint in Philo of any sectarian self-definition. Some scholars have suggested that the Therapeutae were the Egyptian branch of the Essenes; others have suggested that the Therapeutae never existed in the form in which Philo describes them, for his account is full of exaggerations and distortions. Neither question can be resolved.

CONCLUSION

Sects are elitist groups, small and selective. The social standing of their members is irrelevant; the members of a sect, whether poor or rich, plebeian or aristocratic, remove themselves from the social mainstream and make themselves special. The commonality of property among the Essenes and the early Christians enforces this point. It is their membership in the sect, not their prior economic or social status, that confers an elite rank on the members. The groups have priestly character; they consist in large part of priests and of laypeople who look upon themselves as priests. Their community is the temple, their liturgy is the sacrificial cult. They observe the laws of purity in order to distinguish themselves, the saved, from the rest. Alienated from society and disenchanted with the temple and the priesthood of Jerusalem, they arrogate to themselves the exclusive claim of truth that the temple still possessed for the rest of the community. Until the coming of the eschaton, the sect alone is the path to God. In the first century CE, the Qumranites and the early Christians (and perhaps the Samaritans) were sects. The Pharisees, at least in the first century, seem not to have been a sect but a more amorphous group that remained distinctive while exerting great influence. And of course there were many other groups as well.

Sectarianism is the culmination of the democratization of Judaism. Its essential goal was to bridge the gap between humanity and God through

constant practice of the commandments of the Torah and total immersion in the contemplation of God and his works. Sectarian piety supplants or supplements the temple cult through prayer, scriptural study, and purifications; thus it rejects or dilutes the power of the priesthood. The democratization (or the individualization) of religion was a process that affected all forms of Judaism in Second Temple times, as I discussed in chapter 3, but it affected the sects most of all.

Most Jews were not members of any sect. They observed the Sabbath and the holidays, heard the scriptural lessons in synagogue on Sabbath, abstained from forbidden foods, purified themselves before entering the temple precincts, circumcised their sons on the eighth day, and adhered to the ethical norms of folk piety. Whatever they may have thought of the priests and the temple, they went on pilgrimage to the temple at least once a year and probably relied on the priesthood to propitiate the Deity through a constant and well-maintained sacrificial cult. If the average Jews of antiquity were anything like the average citizen of every other time and place, they were more concerned about rainfall and harvests than about theology and philosophy. For these average Jews, the primary benefit of the democratization of religion was that it provided an additional means for serving God and thereby ensuring divine blessing. Sectarians and other pietists demanded a much greater reliance on individual piety and a much reduced reliance on the temple cult, but these insatiable demands were dismissed by the many as the rantings of a fanatic few.

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6

Canonization and Its Implications

The Jews of the Second Temple period created the document that Christians call "the Old Testament" and that Jews call "Tanak" (pronounced Tanakh)—an acronym for *Torah* (the five books of Moses), *Neviim* (the Prophets), and *Ketuvim* (the Writings)—that is, the Bible. In the Persian period, the various strands of the Torah were woven together for the final time, and the resulting product became the "constitution" or foundation document for all forms of Judaism. No one any longer dared to modify the older compositions (called by modern scholars J, P, H, E, and D) that it incorporated, not even to reconcile their numerous contradictions or to clarify their numerous obscurities. Nor did anyone ever try to "reopen" the Torah by discovering additional fragments of its constituent sources. Once the text of the Torah was firmly established in the last centuries BCE, no one (except the Samaritans) dared change it. Even the very parchment (or papyrus) on which the Torah was written became sacred.

In the Hellenistic period, the words of the prophets underwent a similar process of selection and edition. The prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve prophets (Hosea to Malachi) had been augmented through the centuries by the words of numerous anonymous seers and interpolators, the most famous of whom are Second Isaiah and Third Isaiah. Now, however, all these books were closed (even if their texts remained fluid for some time). Not only were the words of anonymous seers no longer added to those of the named prophets; in addition, no one any longer saw heavenly visions and heard heavenly voices quite like those of previous times. Prophecy of the biblical sort ceased; seers continued to see visions and hearers continued to hear voices, but their methods, messages, and settings were different from those of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Instead of consulting prophets, people eager to hear the word of the Lord would study the collected words of those who had

once spoken with God. Out of the words once spoken by a prophet, one could still hear the divine voice.

This process of selection, edition, and veneration of the books of the past is called "canonization" or "the formation of the biblical canon." The Greek word *kanōn* means "straight rod" or "bar," hence "rule," "norm," or "standard." In the Christian Greek of the second century CE, it came to mean "rule of faith," the revealed truth of the church. By the fourth century the noun "canon" was used regularly by both Greek and Latin church fathers to designate the fixed selection of authoritative books believed to have been written under divine inspiration and therefore to constitute the sacred Scriptures of the church (the Old Testament and the New Testament). Since heretics included among these Scriptures (esp. the New Testament) numerous works that in the eyes of the orthodox were neither sacred nor inspired, the definition of the canon of the Christian Bible became an important task for both heresy hunters and church councils.

Not all the works that were excluded from the canon were deemed heretical. Some were merely "of the second rank" or "among the apocrypha" (works that were "to be hidden away" because they were not to be read, at least not in the liturgy). For most church fathers, "the apocrypha" was not a fixed selection but a fluid category for books of dubious status. In modern parlance, the phrase "*the* Apocrypha" (or "*the* Apocrypha of the Old Testament") is often used to designate those Jewish books (Ben Sira [Sirach], Wisdom of Solomon, 1–2 Maccabees, Judith, Tobit, etc.) that are included in the Greek or Latin Old Testament of the church but are absent from the Hebrew Tanak of the Jews. This usage gained currency only when Martin Luther removed these books from the Old Testament and edited them as a separate collection under the title "The Apocrypha." (Catholics call these books, or at least the majority of these books, "deuterocanonical" and use the term "apocryphal" to designate those books that the church rejected from the canon altogether.)

The Jews of antiquity apparently did not have a word for "canon." Philo, Josephus, and the New Testament use the Greek terms for "Scripture," "Scriptures," "sacred Scriptures," "the sacred books," and the like, and the rabbis use their Hebrew equivalents, but none of them has a word for "canon" in this sense. The rabbis at least have a phrase that is the functional equivalent of the term "canonical." A book that "renders the hands impure" is "sacred" and, in our terminology, canonical; a book that does not "render the hands impure" is not sacred and, in our terminology, noncanonical. Like the church fathers, the rabbis mention books that are or should be "hidden away," that is, not read at all or at least not read in synagogue.[1]

1. On books that render the hands impure, see *m. Yadayim* 4:6, cited in the previous

Perhaps, one might argue, the Jews of antiquity did not have a word for "canon" because the entire concept was foreign to them. This radical position is not without some support. In his *Jewish Antiquities*, a survey of Jewish history from Adam and Eve until the outbreak of the war in 66 CE, Josephus does not distinguish between canonical books and noncanonical. He does not tell the reader when he is paraphrasing a biblical book and when a nonbiblical book. Josephus does not give any indication that he has crossed some great divide when his account reaches the end of the biblical material. He utilizes exactly the same techniques for the paraphrase of both biblical and nonbiblical works. It is impossible to tell from the *Jewish Antiquities* whether Josephus has any notion of canon. These facts are remarkable because in another of his works Josephus provides the earliest extant description of the biblical canon (see below), a description that he ignores in his *Jewish Antiquities*.

Like Josephus, the Jews of Qumran, too, did not have a clear "biblical" canon. That they regarded the Torah, the Prophets, and the Psalms as authoritative is evident from the manner in which these books were cited and interpreted in their literature, but there is no sign that they had any conception of a "Bible." The caves have yielded fragments of biblical and nonbiblical books, but from the physical remains of the scrolls, it is impossible to tell whether the texts written on them are "biblical" or not. The writing material, the scribal techniques, the mode of preservation—all these are substantially identical for (what we could call) "biblical" and "nonbiblical" books alike.[2]

In spite of the failure of the ancient Jews to use the word "canon" or an equivalent, and in spite of the absence of a defined biblical canon at Qumran and in the major work of Josephus, nevertheless I think that most Jews of antiquity would have recognized the concepts conveyed by the words "canon" and "canonical." The definition of these words is very elusive, as we shall see, especially if we admit that not all Jews necessarily would have shared the same definition; but in the final analysis the terms do reflect some reality in ancient Judaism. In contrast, I avoid the terms "apocrypha" and "apocryphal,"

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chapter. For books that are, or are to be, hidden away, see, e.g., *m. Pesahim* 4:9 and *Shabbat* 16:1.

2. This sentence perhaps should be modified since there is some evidence that the Qumranite scribes knew how to distinguish "biblical" books from non-biblical. In some Qumran manuscripts the name of God (YHWH) is written in paleo-Hebrew letters instead of the regular square script; this phenomenon occurs irregularly but only in (what we would call) "biblical" texts and citations. On the other hand, Qumran scribes reserved their peculiar system of spelling (a "full" spelling, with the addition of vowel-letters that are usually omitted in non-Qumranic Hebrew) only for non-biblical texts, mostly texts of their own composition. How to interpret these facts, I am not sure; but I do not believe that they suffice to demonstrate that the Qumranites had a notion of "canon."

although the rabbis use the latter expression, because the words invariably convey the impression of a fixed list of "deuterocanonical" books, a list that never existed in any form of ancient Judaism.

CANON AND CANONICAL

A *canon* is a list of books. Unlike a regular list, a canon contains a fixed number of items (although it can be expanded or shortened from time to time). A *canonical* work is distinguished from a noncanonical one by three characteristics: it was created in a previous generation, usually long before it achieved its canonical status; its text is firmly established and is not open to changes of any kind (except those introduced by scholars seeking to produce an accurate text); and it is regarded as "authoritative" by a community. This definition of canon and canonical applies not only to the Tanak of the Jews and the Old and New Testaments of the Christians. All literate cultures produce canons and canonical literature; even within Judaism and Christianity, canonization of authoritative works persisted long after the creation of the Jewish and Christian Bibles. Furthermore, with a few modifications the definition applies not only to books but also to other products of human creativity (art, music, architecture, etc.).

All artistic creation is the product of imitation and originality. All painters, authors, sculptors, and composers imitate their predecessors even while they try to assert their own originality. Because artists imitate their predecessors, we can recognize certain styles that extend over considerable periods (e.g., Baroque architecture, Romantic music). At a certain point in artistic development, imitation ceases because it has become impossible. There is a sense that the old style has reached its limit and can no longer be imitated or developed. The old style is replaced by a new one, which may be the result either of a conscious rejection of the old ways (e.g., the rebellion of the nineteenth-century French Impressionists against the conventional modes of painting) or of a further incremental modification that only later is recognized as the culmination of the old and the introduction of the new (e.g., the shift in musical style from Classical to Romantic). During the efflorescence of a given style, and more especially a generation or two after its decline, certain artists and works are recognized as the best representatives of their genres. They are deemed "classics" of enduring worth and are studied or imitated. In other words, they are canonical.

In the latter part of the Second Temple period, Jewish culture was hardly unique, therefore, in selecting the best and the most enduring works of its literary patrimony and according them canonical status. Their contemporaries

in the Greek world were engaged in a parallel process. In Greco-Roman antiquity, the art of imitation was not left to personal whim. Rhetorical manuals taught orators, historians, and poets the approved manner by which the great authors of the past should be imitated; they gave students lists of authors who were the models of perfection within each genre. The works of these authors were studied, imitated, and preserved; the works of other authors were neglected. In the fourth century BCE (the century after Ezra), Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, playwrights of the previous century, attained canonical rank: they were recognized as "*the* three tragedians." Around the year 200 BCE (about the same time as Ben Sira), one scholar in Alexandria selected nine lyric poets, all of whom lived centuries earlier, as the best of their genre. Scholars and rhetoricians in the following generations made selective lists in other genres (e.g., the ten Attic orators) or modified the selections that had been made earlier. In every case, however, the selected authors, who in Roman times collectively received the Latin title *classici* (the best, those of the first class), lived long before the time of those who were making the selection.

The similarity of this selection process to that which produced the Tanak is so striking that scholars from the middle of the eighteenth century to the present have not hesitated to call the Greek selections "canons," although the Greeks themselves never used the term in this sense.[3] Both the Jews and the Greeks of the Hellenistic period realized that they were living in a postclassical age and that the greatest expressions of their national literatures had already been written.

The canonization of the Jewish and Christian Bibles was but the first act of canonization within Judaism and Christianity. Both religions have a large number of "canonical" authors and texts that, no less than the Bible and in many respects far more than the Bible, teach doctrine and practice to the faithful. In Christianity these authors are the church fathers of antiquity, the scholastics of the Middle Ages, and the leaders of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. In 1298 the Latin church introduced a feast day in honor of the four doctors (teachers) of the church (Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory the Great), and since that time the Catholic Church has expanded this "canon" to include more than thirty authors. In rabbinic Judaism, these works are the Mishnah, the two Talmudim (= Talmuds; although with the decline of the land-of-Israel Jewry during the early Middle Ages, the Talmud of the land of Israel, known as the Yerushalmi [Jerusalem] Talmud, soon fell from the rabbinic canon), and their continuators in medieval and early modern times. These postbiblical works are canonical within their

3. Rudolf Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 203–8.

respective communities. They have shaped the religious traditions that follow them and are venerated and studied. Over the centuries, Christian doctrine (at least until the Reformation) has been shaped more by Augustine than by Paul, just as Jewish practice has been shaped more by the Mishnah than by the Torah.

This brief survey of the phenomenon of canonization shows that the canonical status of the Tanak and of the Christian Bible is not unique. It is amply paralleled in other cultures and in the Judaism and Christianity of later times. But from another perspective, the canonical status of the Tanak and the Christian Bible is unique. The Bible clearly enjoyed (and still enjoys) a measure of authority unlike that of other canonical works, and that authority is to be connected with the Tanak's status as the revealed or inspired word of God. But what is the nature of the connection between the Tanak's special authority and its special status? Which is the cause and which the effect? Did the Tanak's status as the revealed or inspired word of God confer on it unusual authority, or did the Tanak's special authority engender the belief in its divine origin? The answer is probably something between the two.

The Jews of antiquity believed that the books of the Tanak were revealed or inspired by God. This belief is attested in the first century CE (see below) and was adopted by both Christianity and rabbinic Judaism. Whether or not this belief is correct is a question that a historian cannot answer (cf. discussion of "orthodoxy" and "heresy" in chap. 5 above). It is clear, however, that belief in a book's divine origin was not a sufficient condition to establish its membership in the Tanak. Many ancient poets and authors claimed inspiration from Apollo or the Muses. One Greek scholar in antiquity astutely observed that legislators routinely ascribed their laws to a deity in order to give their legislation greater authority. He illustrated this thesis by citing Minos, the lawgiver of the Cretans, who ascribed his laws to Zeus; Lycurgus, the lawgiver of the Spartans, who ascribed his laws to Apollo; and Moses, the lawgiver of the Jews, who ascribed his laws to "Iao."[4] Furthermore, many Jewish books outside the Tanak, notably the apocalypses, claimed to be inspired or revealed by God or some other heavenly figure. At least some Jews regarded this literature as authoritative and perhaps accorded it "biblical" status. *Fourth Ezra* (also called 2 Esdras), an apocalyptic work of the first century CE, implies that these books were even more authoritative than the twenty-four books of the Tanak (14:46–47). Pagan books, pagan laws, and Jewish apocalypses claimed to be the repository of divine revelation, and the parallel claim of the

4. Diodorus of Sicily 1.94.1–2 (from Posidonius?), in Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1974–84), 1:171–72, no. 58.

Tanak will not set it apart from the crowd. What, then, makes the books of the Tanak different from all other canonical books?

For the historian, the Tanak and the New Testament are special neither because they were revealed or inspired by God, nor because they were believed to have been revealed or inspired by God, but because they enjoy special status within their faith communities. The canonical books of the Tanak possess existential value for the Jewish community. They transcend the period of their origins and respond to the community's needs by shaping its identity and endowing its existence with meaning and purpose. The books are "relevant" in a very immediate sense. They contain laws that are still binding and must be obeyed; prophecies presenting eternal verities that speak, even generations after they were first delivered, to the present and the future; histories that are paradigms of reward and punishment, model lessons in God's control of human affairs; wisdom that is always salutary and ennobling; and hymns and poems that bring the humanity of every generation closer to God. No ancient source gives this definition—after all, no ancient Jewish source even has a word for canon!—and not all Jews everywhere at all times maintained this attitude toward their canonical literature; but the "existential" definition does, I think, accurately reflect the meaning of "biblical" within Judaism from ancient to modern times.

Because the Torah, the Prophets, and at least some of the books of the Writings (notably the Psalms) were seen as eternally valid and existentially meaningful, they were venerated far more than other canonical works. The scrolls on which they are written are sacred (as the rabbis say, they "render the hands impure"). The scrolls of the Torah are more sacred than those of the Prophets, which in turn are more sacred than those of the Writings, just as the Torah is more authoritative than the Prophets, and the Prophets are more authoritative than the Writings. The scrolls of the Mishnah, in contrast, have no sanctity whatsoever. (What degree of sanctity the Jews of Qumran ascribed to their scrolls is unknown.) The sanctity of the Torah scrolls was an important element in the Jewish piety of both Israel and the Diaspora. The emperor Augustus decreed that anyone caught stealing "the sacred books" of the Jews was to be punished severely; in the first century CE, a Roman soldier in Judea desecrated a Torah scroll, and the only way the Romans could quiet the subsequent disorder that erupted among the Jews was to behead the offender.[5]

Since they are seen as eternally valid, the Torah and the Prophets provide lections for the weekly liturgy, although the Writings (and rabbinic literature)

5. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 16.6.2 §164; *Jewish War* 2.12.2 §§228–31; *Jewish Antiquities* 20.5.4 §§113–17.

do not. At least in theory, the Torah was the ultimate authority, the record of God's revelation to Moses. Through the power of interpretation, the Jews were able to free themselves from laws of the Torah that they found unethical, harsh, or unreasonable, but they would rarely admit that they were overturning the sacred text. They would insist that they were merely interpreting it (see below). The same attitude can often be found in the Talmud's approach to the Mishnah; yet many rabbis, both in ancient times and later, had no qualms in rejecting outright some of the laws of the Mishnah, although they accepted the authority of the Mishnah as a whole and may have regarded it as containing the "oral Torah" that was revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai. The Mishnah is a "canonical" work, but it is not eternally valid; its authority is not that of the biblical books.

The most important consequence of the canonization of the Tanak was that it was regarded as inspired or revealed by God. Perhaps the Torah and the Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve Minor Prophets) became canonical because they were regarded as divinely inspired, but for the rest of the biblical canon, the sequence is almost certainly the reverse. Over half of the Hebrew canon consists of works whose authors do not claim to be inspired by God (Joshua–Kings, and virtually all of the Writings except Daniel), and it is likely that the belief in the divine inspiration of all these was derived by analogy from the Prophets and the Torah. By the first century CE, many Jews believed that any ancient text containing eternal truths must have been divinely inspired. In all likelihood the Writings became part of the Tanak before they were seen as divine, because divine origin is not a necessary condition for biblical status.

To summarize: "canonical" is a broader concept than "biblical." All literate cultures, including Judaism, produce "canonical" or "classical" texts that are admired, studied, imitated, and regarded as authoritative. The phenomenon of "canonization" is not restricted either to Judaism or to antiquity. Canonical Jewish texts have been written from ancient to modern times, and they will continue to be written for as long as Judaism remains a living culture. A select few of these canonical works, however, were chosen in antiquity to form the Tanak, "the Bible" or "Scripture" or "the Scriptures." These biblical works were regarded as *the* basic writings of Judaism, were especially venerated, and by the first century CE were believed by most Jews, if not by all, to have been inspired or revealed by God. Biblical books are distinguished by their higher level of authority. They are existentially meaningful and eternally valid. The authority of some other Jewish canonical works (like the Mishnah and the two Talmudim) may approximate that of the Tanak yet is decidedly inferior to it, at least in theory.

Now I turn to the history of the canonization of the Bible. To minimize confusion, I shall concentrate my discussion on the Tanak, the Hebrew Bible, and shall

only briefly treat the Bible of the Greek Jews. In the following pages I use "canonical" as a synonym for "biblical," meaning "forming part of the special collection of works that are believed to be existentially meaningful and eternally valid."

THE HISTORY OF THE BIBLICAL CANON

The Torah

For all the Jews of antiquity, the core of the canon was the Torah (lit., "teaching" or "instruction"), often called by Greek-speaking Jews "the Law" or "the laws." (The term *Pentateuch*, "the five scrolls," derives from the Greek church fathers.) The narrator of the first four books of the Torah (Genesis–Numbers) is anonymous; God often speaks to the patriarchs (in Genesis) and to Moses and the Israelites (in Exodus–Numbers), but the text nowhere identifies either its narrator or its author. Deuteronomy, by contrast, claims to be the work of Moses. It is a series of long orations in which Moses speaks about himself in the first person (although in some sections an anonymous narrator speaks about Moses in the third person). It is no accident that Deuteronomy, which began its career as a document discovered in the temple, has respect for writing and the written word. It refers to itself as "the book of the Torah" (e.g., Deut. 29:20) and enjoins the king to write a copy of the Torah for himself (Deut. 17:18). The historical works written in the Deuteronomic tradition (Joshua–Kings) frequently refer to a book called "the Torah of Moses" (e.g., Josh. 8:31; 2 Kgs. 14:6) and use expressions like "in accordance with what is written in the book of the Torah" (e.g., Josh. 8:34) or "in accordance with what is written in [the book of] the Torah of Moses" (e.g., Josh. 23:6; 1 Kgs. 2:3). In these passages the word "Torah" retains its original meaning of "instruction" or "teaching" but is on its way to becoming a proper noun.

The Deuteronomic idea that Moses wrote a sacred book struck deep roots after the exile. In the literature of the Persian period, the expression "Torah of Moses" sometimes means simply "the teaching of Moses" (Mal. 4:4 [3:22]) but usually indicates a book. This book is no longer Deuteronomy alone (as in Neh. 13:1, which refers to "the book of Moses"), but the priestly tradition as well. "P" and "D" have been combined. Laws found not in Deuteronomy but in Leviticus are said to have been "written in the Torah of Moses the servant of God" (Ezra 3:2 AT; 2 Chr. 23:18; 35:12). Ezra, "a scribe expert in the Torah of Moses" (Ezra 7:6 AT), reads from "the book of the Torah of Moses" (Neh. 8:1 AT), which is also called "the book of the Torah of God" (Neh. 8:18 AT), and finds within it injunctions about the festival of Sukkot that are part of the priestly tradition (cf. Neh. 8:15–16 with Lev. 23:40).

During the Persian period, a book emerged that was known as "the Torah of Moses." It was the product of centuries of tradition, both written and oral, but now its various strands (J, E, P, H, D, and others) were intertwined for the final time, and editorial activity ceased. Interpretive glosses were no longer included within the work. The book was believed to be the work of Moses, and all who would worship God properly studied it and obeyed its commands. In other words, the canonization of the Torah had begun. The process was not yet complete, however. Its text was not yet firmly established, and its authority was not yet above challenge.

Jewish tradition, represented by the Babylonian Talmud and by *4 Ezra*, credits Ezra with having "edited" the Torah, that is, changing its script from the "round" script of Israelite times (usually called "paleo-Hebrew") to the "square" script still used today.[6] This tradition is probably based on Ezra's status as "scribe" and on his activity as a teacher of the Torah. Whether Ezra had anything to do with the canonization or editing of the Torah, we do not know. Among the Qumran scrolls are several manuscripts of the Torah from the Hellenistic period, some of them in paleo-Hebrew script. These manuscripts, along with the Greek and the Samaritan versions, show that the Torah text with which we are now familiar was not firmly established until the second century BCE. Before that point, and to some extent even afterward, the Torah circulated in at least three recensions.

Similarly, the status of the Torah as the sole literary expression of the revelation of God to Moses was still subject to challenge as late as the second century BCE. Some Jews believed that they still had the option of reformulating the narratives and laws attributed to Moses. These Jews wrote the *Temple Scroll* and the book of *Jubilees*. The former, discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls, is either a very early work of the Qumran Jews, perhaps of their founder (mid-second century BCE?), or is a work inherited by them from some earlier group or school (perhaps third century BCE). The *Temple Scroll* rewrites the laws of the Torah, rearranges them, reformulates them, expands on them, and even adds new laws not found in the original. But the *Temple Scroll* is no mere paraphrase of the Torah. It presents itself as *the* Torah. In the Torah now in our Bibles, some anonymous narrator tells us that God spoke to Moses, but in the *Temple Scroll* God speaks to Moses directly. Laws that refer to God in the third person in the Torah are cast as referring to God in the first person in the *Temple Scroll*. The ostensible author of the work is God.

The book of *Jubilees*, written in the 160s BCE, rewrites the narrative portion of the Torah, from Genesis through Exodus 12 (precisely the point at which the *Temple Scroll* begins). The work greatly expands on the Torah and

6. *B. Sanhedrin* 21b.

tries to prove the authenticity of the solar calendar and the pre-Sinaitic origin of the commandments. The alleged author of the work is an angel who reveals to Moses the content of various heavenly tablets.

Do the *Temple Scroll* and *Jubilees* accept the canonicity of the Torah that we know? I shall argue below that, in paradoxical fashion, the canonization of Scripture allowed the Jews both more and less freedom than they had enjoyed previously in treating their sacred tradition. The fantastic retellings of Scripture, especially of the Torah, that became popular in the second century BCE in both Israel and the Diaspora testify to the newly gained freedom. But the *Temple Scroll* and *Jubilees*, especially the former, seem not to have been written from this perspective. Their goal is not to *supplement* Scripture but to *supplant* it. If this interpretation is correct, the Torah did not enjoy unchallenged authority in the land of Israel even in the middle of the second century BCE.

In the Diaspora, however, the authority of the Torah was secure. In the third century BCE, the Jews of Alexandria translated the Torah into Greek, obviously because they regarded it as their sacred constitution. The *Letter of Aristeas*, a fictional story written by an Egyptian Jew around the year 100 BCE about the origins of the translation, contains the earliest extant references to the Torah as "the Book" (the Bible) and "Scripture."[7] Diaspora Jews soon applied these terms to the Greek translation of the Torah as well; they had no doubt that the translation allowed them to read the very words written by Moses. By the first century CE, in both Israel and the Diaspora, the terms "Scripture" and "the Book" had come to include all the sacred writings, not merely the Torah.

The Prophets

Around the year 200 BCE, Ben Sira depicted the scribe as the one "who devotes himself to the study of the law of the Most High. He seeks out the wisdom of all the ancients, and is concerned with prophecies" (Sir. 38:34–39:1). Ezra had been a scribe skilled in the Torah of Moses, but 250 years later a scribe had to know "wisdom" and "prophecies" too. Ben Sira himself was such a man, as his grandson testifies in the prologue to the Greek translation of his book: "My grandfather Jesus, after devoting himself especially to the reading of the law and the prophets and the other books of our fathers, and after acquiring considerable proficiency in them, was himself also led to write something pertaining to instruction and wisdom" (RSV). In his praise of famous men, a historical survey of the heroes of Israel, Ben Sira includes Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and "the Twelve Prophets" (49:10). It is difficult to

7. *Letter of Aristeas* §§155 and 316.

say whether Ben Sira is referring merely to important figures of the past or to canonical books. He gives no indication that he believes their prophecies either are eternally valid or address the needs of any time other than the one for which they were first enunciated. Ben Sira thinks it important for a scribe and a learned Jew to know prophecies and wisdom, but this hardly means that Ben Sira had a notion of a biblical canon.

In the height of the religious crisis of the mid-second century BCE, the author of Daniel sought to unlock the secret to the events that were taking place. The answer was to be found in the book of Jeremiah (Dan. 9:2): "I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to the prophet Jeremiah, must be fulfilled for the devastation of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years." Jeremiah's promise of restoration, prophesied to the Babylonian exiles several hundred years earlier, was understood by the author of Daniel to promise the restoration of Israel after the depredations of Antiochus Epiphanes. Thus did the words of Jeremiah's prophecy live on, their potency and veracity undiminished long after their own time. The same attitude toward the prophets is well attested in the *pesharim* from Qumran, as I shall discuss below; in the Gospels, with their frequent reference to the "fulfillment" of biblical prophecies; and in rabbinic literature. Read from this perspective, the prophets are "canonical." It seems, then, that the prophetic books were edited before the time of Ben Sira and became canonical during the second and first centuries BCE. The Samaritans, who separated themselves from the Judean community at the end of the second century BCE, did not take the prophets with them.

The Writings

For some Jews, especially in the land of Israel, the second part of the Bible was now closed. It consisted of the historical books Joshua–Kings, which were a preface to the prophetic books (or an epilogue to the Torah), and the prophetic books themselves. Additions to the canon were incorporated in a third section that ultimately became known simply as "the Writings." When the book of Daniel, which was written in the 160s BCE, came to be canonized, it was included not in the Prophets, a section already complete, but in the Writings. Many textbooks still claim that the rabbinic "synod" at Yavneh (or Jamnia) finalized the canonization of the Hebrew Bible about 100 CE. The rabbis were motivated, we are told, by a desire to exclude Christianity from the fold and to exclude Christian and apocalyptic books from the canon. These views have lost favor in recent years, primarily for lack of evidence, as I shall discuss in the next chapter. In any case, no additions to the biblical canon were made after the first century CE. The rabbis in the third and fourth centuries were

still debating the sanctity of various books. Esther in particular had to fight for its place in the canon. The Jews of Qumran did not read Esther (not a single fragment of the book has been found there); Esther is missing from the earliest extant patristic list of biblical books, written in the second half of the second century CE; and the rabbis still were not entirely sure about the book a century or two later.[8] But in the end Esther triumphed.

The Writings are a motley assortment of works. Most of them are books of wisdom, the third item on the curriculum of the scribe, according to Ben Sira; but others are hymns, histories, and novellas. The most incongruous book is the Song of Songs, which seems to be a collection of secular love songs. By the first century CE, these works had been collected and regarded as the inspired word of God; presumably they were also regarded as eternally valid and existentially meaningful. By rabbinic times at the latest, all of the Writings were regarded in this light, but such an attitude is attested in the first century CE only toward the Psalms (see next section). Whoever included the Song of Songs within the canon probably interpreted it, as the rabbis of the second century CE did, as a sacred love song between God and Israel.

Thus the tripartite canon was born: Torah, Prophets, and Writings. This canon was accepted by many Jews in both the land of Israel and the Diaspora. Some Jews, however, like those of Qumran, preferred not to define a canon at all; some, like the author of *4 Ezra*, had a canon of twenty-four books, yet an additional collection of apocalyptic works besides; others, especially some Jews of the Diaspora, looked on the Torah as a work in a category of its own ("the Law") and otherwise were content to preserve a collection of authoritative literature that did not distinguish between Prophets and Writings, between the divinely inspired and the uninspired, and between the eternally valid and the transient.

The Tripartite Canon

Ben Sira divided the curriculum of the scribe into law, wisdom, and prophecies. This classification reflects the ancient distinction between priest, sage, and prophet. Four hundred years before Ben Sira, the Israelites rejected Jeremiah's prophecies of doom and insisted that life would proceed normally: "For instruction [Torah] shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet" (Jer. 18:18). In Jeremiah's time,

8. See the canon list of Melito, in Henry B. Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, rev. Richard R. Otley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902; repr., New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1968), 203; cf. the canon list of Athanasius (mid-fourth century), ibid., 203–4, which explicitly groups Esther with other books that are not canonical. Rabbinic debate over Esther: *b. Megillah* 7a.

Torah, counsel, and the word of God were sought from living people; in Ben Sira's time, they were sought through the study of books, and the master student was the scribe. Ben Sira's grandson slightly revises his grandfather's classification, changing the designation of the third category from "wisdom" to "the other books" and departing from the order of Jeremiah. The grandson speaks of "the law and the prophets and the other books of our fathers" (RSV). Neither Ben Sira nor his grandson is familiar with a tripartite "canon," but the foundations were laid, and the tripartite canon clearly emerged in the first century CE.

Three passages of the first century CE describe a tripartite classification of the literature of the ancients, and two of these texts clearly refer to a canon. In all three, the Psalms (or "hymns") accompany the wisdom books as the most prominent component of the third category. Philo writes that the Therapeutae study "laws and oracles delivered through the mouths of prophets, and psalms and anything else which fosters and perfects [or: and psalms and other books which foster and perfect] knowledge and piety."[9] Whether this is a "canon" is hard to tell. Philo himself regards the Torah as the inspired word of Moses (or the revealed word of God) and devotes enormous energy to its interpretation (see below); he practically ignores the rest of the Bible, canonical or not. The second passage is Luke 24:44, in which the risen Jesus tells his disciples that "everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." The Psalms too are now regarded as the work of prophecy, whose statements must be "fulfilled." The New Testament often regards the Psalms in this light; Psalms and Isaiah are the two biblical books most frequently cited in the New Testament. The Jews of Qumran wrote commentaries (known as *pesharim*; in singular, *pesher*) on the Psalms, Habakkuk, Nahum, and other prophets.

The third passage is the most important because it is the earliest explicit evidence that the Jews of antiquity had a clearly articulated theory of "canonical" and "noncanonical." The passage is from the *Against Apion* of Josephus:[10]

> We [Jews] do not possess myriads of inconsistent books, conflicting with each other. Our books, those which are justly accredited [or: those which are rightly believed to be divine], are but two and twenty, and contain the record of all time. Of these, five are the books of Moses, which comprise the laws and the tradition from the creation of man to the death of Moses. This period is slightly less than three thousand years. From the death of Moses until Artaxerxes, who succeeded Xerxes as king of Persia, the prophets subsequent to Moses wrote the history of the events of their own times in thirteen books.

9. Philo, *On the Contemplative Life* 3 §25.
10. Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.8 §§38–41.

> The remaining four books contain hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life. From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets.

Although Josephus does not use the word "canon," he clearly is describing a collection of books that we (and the church fathers of the fourth century) would call "canonical." The context of this passage, an attack on Greek historiography, explains its peculiar emphasis on "the Bible as history." The Greek histories are filled with errors and contradictions because they were written by men who have no regard for either truth or accuracy. The Jewish histories, by contrast, are truthful and free of contradictions.

According to Josephus, all twenty-two books of the canon were inspired by God and therefore are authoritative and free of contradictions. All were written by prophets who lived before the reign of Artaxerxes (465–425 BCE, the period of Ezra). All were transmitted accurately by the priests. The canon is divided in three parts: the five books of Moses, the thirteen prophetic writings, and four books of hymns and precepts.

This passage implies that *all* Jews had a biblical canon of twenty-two books arranged in the configuration 5–13–4, but Josephus is either poorly informed or deliberately misleading (after all, he is trying to emphasize Jewish unanimity!). The rabbinic canon, as described in a passage of the Babylonian Talmud, consists of twenty-four books instead of the Josephan twenty-two, but this disagreement probably reflects not two different canons but two different ways of counting the canonical books.[11] Similarly, *4 Ezra* knows a canon of twenty-four books. More significant is the fact that the rabbinic division of the canon has a different tripartite configuration: five in the Torah, eight in the Prophets, and eleven in the Writings, or 5–8–11.

The most striking evidence, however, is provided by the manuscripts of the Greek translation of the Bible and by the patristic lists of the canonical books. Although both of these sources are of Christian origin, many scholars argue that they reflect, at least to some degree, the biblical canons used by the Jews of the Greek Diaspora. Some of the canons attested in these sources are tripartite, but none of them is identical with the canon of either Josephus or the rabbis (e.g., one father has twelve books of history, five books of poetry, and five prophetic books, or 12–5–5). Many of the canons are not tripartite at all (e.g., one father describes a canon of four Pentateuchs: the five books of the laws, of poetry, of the writings, of the prophets, with the addition of Ezra

11. *B. Bava Batra* 14b–15a. The lower numeration counts Ruth as part of Judges and Lamentations as part of Jeremiah.

and Esther at the end, for a total of twenty-two, configured 5–5–5–5–2), and some have no discernible pattern of arrangement. Another set of these canons (virtually all the manuscripts and some of the patristic lists) includes the "apocryphal" works, which neither Josephus nor the rabbis nor anyone else in the land of Israel, as far as is known, saw fit to include.[12] If the Christian evidence reflects the practices of the Greek Diaspora, Josephus errs when he implies that all Jews everywhere had a tripartite canon of twenty-two books. All Jews agreed that the first five books of the canon were the Torah; most Jews agreed that these were followed by the historical books Joshua–Kings; after that the near unanimity breaks down completely. And of course some Jews, like the men of Qumran, may not have had a clear notion of canon at all.

Why These and Not Those?

In another important respect, Josephus's description of the canon is wrong. Supported by *4 Ezra* and rabbinic tradition, Josephus states that all the books in the biblical canon were written before the time of Artaxerxes (mid fifth-century BCE). The origins of this view are easy to see, because none of the books in the Hebrew canon explicitly refers to the period after Ezra and Nehemiah. But in fact, many books in the Bible were written long after that period. The late books certainly include Chronicles, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Esther, and of course, Daniel, which was written (utilizing older material in the first part) only in the 160s BCE. Several others may be late as well: Job, Song of Songs, Jonah, Joel, sections of Proverbs, the second half of Zechariah, and many of the psalms. The date of all these works must have been forgotten by the first century CE, so that Josephus could claim that the entire Bible predates the reign of Artaxerxes. The Jews represented by the Christian canons of the Bible did not agree with Josephus and rabbinic tradition. These Jews included in their Bible books that were written even later than Daniel (1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon) and works that did not even pretend, as Daniel did, to be the product of the Persian period (Ben Sira (Sirach), 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees).These Jews obviously did not believe that a book had to be ancient and divinely inspired (or eternally valid) to be included in the Bible.

The entire process of the canonization of the Tanak raises a question: Why were these books included but not those? Why Ecclesiastes but not Ben Sira? Why Ruth but not Tobit? Why Esther but not Judith? Why Daniel but not *Enoch*? Why Chronicles (a rewrite of Samuel–Kings) but not the *Temple Scroll*

12. For these canon lists, see Swete, *Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, 201–14.

(a rewrite of the laws of Exodus–Deuteronomy)? No objective and absolute criteria distinguish the works that were included from those that were not. The biblical books were not the only ones to claim divine inspiration. Some nonbiblical books were written in Persian or early Hellenistic times (Tobit, *1 Enoch*, Ben Sira) and thus are virtually contemporary with many of the works included in the Writings. The latest book in the Bible, Daniel, is contemporary with *Jubilees*, Judith, and a host of other works. Why these but not those?

Part of the answer is provided by the social setting of the literature. *Fourth Ezra* remarks that the twenty-four books (of the Tanak) are to be read by "the worthy and the unworthy" alike, while the seventy other works that Ezra re-created through divine inspiration were to be read only by "the wise among your people" (*4 Ezra* 14:45–46). In other words, the books of the Bible are not esoteric. Even if Isaiah 65, Nehemiah 10, and Daniel 11–12 were originally the products of small and distinct groups, by the time the books entered the biblical canon, they were the proud possession not of an elite few but of the entire people. Works that remained the esoteric possessions of sects and other such groups were never canonized by the people as a whole. Many cultures in antiquity (esp. in the East) venerated "sacred writings," and these works usually were esoteric or under the exclusive domain of the priests (as in Egypt). In Judaism, however, the "sacred writings" were the possession of the entire community, not the jealously guarded preserve of any one group. Hence *Jubilees*, the *Temple Scroll*, the writings known from Qumran, and the "apocalyptic" literature (except Daniel) were not incorporated into the Bible. Why exoteric works like Ben Sira and Judith were excluded is not as clear. Even in the preexilic period, certain works were excluded from the emerging biblical tradition. The Tanak itself refers to several works that are now lost. These include, for example, the Book of Yashar (Josh. 10:13; 2 Sam. 1:18), the Book of the Wars of the LORD (Num. 21:14), the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah (1 Kgs. 14:19, 29 RSV; etc.). Why did no one care to preserve them? Why weren't these books "canonized"? Centuries later, why weren't Tobit, Ben Sira, and Judith canonized? We do not know.

Summary

The definition of "biblical canon" in antiquity is elusive. For Josephus, the rabbis, and modern traditionalists, the definition is easy and straightforward: the canon contains books that were inspired or revealed by God. But not all Jews accepted this theological definition, which in any case is not attested before the first century CE. I have offered instead the "existential" definition of canonicity, but I fully concede that it too was not necessarily accepted by all the Jews of antiquity. In fact, the definition of canon was not a subject

that interested the Jews of antiquity. They managed to get along without any word for "canon" in this sense and without any discussion of the history of the Bible's canonization.

In spite of the elusiveness of the topic, certain important points are clear. Canonization is a process, not an event. In the final analysis, it is the Jewish community, not some elite, that determines canonicity, since for a book to become canonical, it must be accepted by the community as authoritative. Different communities had different canons and viewed their canons differently. The Tanak of Josephus (in his *Against Apion*) and the rabbis is the shortest known biblical canon, while the Bibles of the Jews of Qumran, the apocalyptic seers (if indeed these two groups viewed their own literatures as part of the Bible), and the Jews of the Diaspora (if indeed the Christian canons derive from Jewish sources) were much longer.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF CANONIZATION

The Jews of the Second Temple period saw themselves as living in a post-classical age. They collected and treasured the works of the ancients because they knew that God spoke more directly and more clearly to their ancestors than to themselves. They no longer tried to write a Torah, or a work of classical prophecy, or (with one or two exceptions) a history in the style of Judges or Kings; these were genres that belonged to a bygone age. And even in the works that they did write, they did not assert their identities. The last Judean author writing in Hebrew and known by name is Ben Sira, who lived about 200 BCE. Otherwise all the literature produced in the land of Israel in Hebrew or Aramaic during the last part of the Second Temple period is either anonymous or pseudonymous.

The canonization of the Tanak was accompanied by the growth of the ideal of scriptural study (see chap. 3) and the emergence of people who claimed political and religious authority on the basis of their scriptural expertise (see chap. 5). The study of Scripture led to the creation of three new literary genres: scriptural translation, paraphrase, and commentary. The very existence of these genres shows that the Bible was regarded as an authoritative book, and their content often shows that the Bible was regarded as a canonical text. Its laws were explicated and made relevant, its prophecies were applied to the events of the day or the very recent past, and its narratives were quarried for model lessons in piety (and impiety!) and paradigms of God's management of human affairs.

However, in paradoxical fashion, even as the Jews declared their loyalty to Scripture, they liberated themselves from it. Many of the extant scriptural

translations, paraphrases, and commentaries, from both Second Temple and rabbinic times, are remarkably fanciful and capricious, and even those that claim to be accurate interpretations of the original often do not live up to their claims. The emergence of canonized texts allowed the Jews great freedom in interpreting their sacred traditions, a freedom that had earlier been denied them when the traditions circulated in fluid form. When the original was still susceptible to change, the distinction between text and interpretation was not clear, and the custodians of the sacred originals would be wary of capricious modifications. They did incorporate comments and interpolations that had a variety of exegetical purposes, but they resisted all major expansions and all comments that could not be intimately attached to their source texts. However, once the traditions were established in fixed and unchanging form—that is, once written texts were edited, venerated, and canonized—the imagination was allowed to soar. A free or adventurous interpretation no longer did any harm since the sacred original was left untouched. The folk imagination provided many episodes and sagas completely unknown to Scripture, and the scholarly imagination was permitted to exercise itself in interpretations that, sometimes at least, completely ignored or destroyed the intent of the original.

Further license to creative interpretation was the belief that the canonical texts were multivalent, that is, that they convey numerous meanings. Since no single interpretation could accurately reflect all the meanings imparted by the text (an attitude common both to modern literary critics and to ancient Jewish exegetes), all interpretations were permitted as long as they could somehow be tied to the text. Only sects argued that they alone understood the true import of the Tanak, and even they, for the most part, insisted on their exclusive possession of the truth only in legal matters. Other passages could be variously interpreted. The creation of a canon allowed the Jews great freedom in the interpretation of their sacred traditions.

Thus the canonization of the Tanak did not stifle the creative spirit as much as it redirected it. All of the Jewish literature written in the Hellenistic and Roman periods draws on the Tanak for imagery and ideas—ancient Judaism has left us few works that are "secular" or nonreligious. In some cases the influence of the biblical models is so strong that the later work is but an imitation of the earlier: First Maccabees imitates Judges and Kings, and the numerous prayers and hymns of the period (e.g., the Qumran Hymns) echo the Psalms and other liturgical passages of the Tanak (see chap. 3).

Far more common than the imitation of biblical models was the production of works in styles and genres unknown to the Tanak. Hellenistic novellas and romances were immensely popular and influenced the literature written in Greek (e.g., 3 Maccabees), Hebrew (e.g., Judith), and Aramaic (e.g., the

Genesis Apocryphon). The book of Judith, in spite of its nationalist message and its Maccabean origin—it was almost certainly written by a supporter of the Maccabees to extol battle on behalf of the Torah and the Lord—is a perfect specimen of a Hellenistic romance, with a beautiful and virtuous heroine, a wicked villain, and a seduction scene. The only element missing is a handsome groom for the heroine. Greek-speaking Jews wrote wisdom books that owe more to Greek diatribes, dialogues, and gnomic poetry than to Proverbs or Job (for example, Wisdom of Solomon, Pseudo-Phocylides); poetry that owed more to Homer and Euripides than to Isaiah and Amos (e.g., Philo the Epic Poet, Ezekiel the Tragedian); history that owes more to Herodotus, Thucydides, and Hellenistic historiography than to Kings and Chronicles (e.g., 2 Maccabees, Josephus); and oracles that owe more to Greek precedents than to biblical prophecy (the *Sibylline Oracles*). Hebrew-speaking Jews no longer wrote prophecies but did write apocalypses (see below), and they developed a genre of testaments (e.g., *Testament of Moses*, *Testament of Levi*).

The literature of the latter part of the Second Temple period is a product of two contradictory tendencies. First and foremost was subordination to the past. The Jews sensed that they were living in a postclassical or "silver" age and that they lacked the religious authority, perhaps authenticity, of their forebears. For the most part, they no longer wrote works in biblical style and (at least the writers in Hebrew) seldom put their own names on their work. Instead of (or in addition to) seeking God through living prophets, they sought God through studying the words of the prophets of old. But as often occurs in such cases, subordination served as a goad to be creative in new areas. The canonization of the Tanak was both a restraint and a stimulant. It freed the imagination, since the word of God was now safely enshrined, and it compelled the Jews to develop new literary genres. Through creative exegesis, the Jews could claim fidelity and subservience to the sacred texts and simultaneously free themselves from their tyrannical grip. When approaching the legacy of their ancestors, the Jews of the latter part of the Second Temple period (and of rabbinic times as well, as I shall discuss in the next chapter) saw themselves as both subservient and free, both subordinate and autonomous.

Since this is not the place for a full discussion of these complex issues, I shall treat briefly only two of the major implications of canonization: the replacement of prophecy by apocalypse and the growth of scriptural interpretation.

From Prophecy to Apocalypse

Prophecy of the biblical kind ceased during the Persian or early Hellenistic period. In classical prophecy from the eighth to the sixth centuries BCE,

the prophet receives a direct revelation from God and in turn transmits that revelation to the people. His (all the literary prophets are male) favorite introductory phrases are "Thus says the LORD" and "The word of God." Occasionally the divine message is represented by an image or a symbol. For the most part, these images are of normal objects and phenomena, and the divine voice informs the prophet of their meaning (e.g., Amos 8:1–3; Jer. 1:11–15). The prophet speaks publicly and clearly; he has been uniquely privileged to receive an oracle from God, and his function is not to keep the information secret but to broadcast it to all who will listen. By announcing God's plans, he hopes to goad the people to repentance. Some prophecies emphasize, instead, the inevitability of the divine decree, minimizing the possibility or efficacy of repentance (e.g., Jer. 27), but the dominant function of classical prophecy, according to its own self-conception (see esp. Ezek. 33), was not to predict some inescapable fate but to stimulate piety and righteous conduct (see chap. 3 above). Another function of the prophet, therefore, is to beseech God to forgive his people and not to punish them as he had threatened (the classic model of this behavior is Moses; see Exod. 32; Num. 14).

Since the prophet was such an important intermediary between God and humanity, his identity was important. All the prophetic books in the biblical canon are ascribed to named individuals. Even if modern scholarship has demonstrated that certain sections are anonymous interpolations or additions that were incorrectly attributed to some of the named prophets (like Isa. 40–66), the fact remains that classical prophecy is, for the most part, the work of named individuals whose identities were preserved as well as their words.

By the second century BCE, classical prophecy had ceased; seers who saw visions and hearers who heard voices instead wrote *apocalypses.* Scholars have long debated whether the term "apocalypse" should designate a genre, a motif, or a mode of thought. The term is most useful if it is used to designate a genre: an *apocalypse* is a literary work that has an angel or some inspired worthy revealing a secret or unraveling a mystery (the Greek verb *apocalyptein* means "to reveal, to uncover"). The secret that is being revealed can be of various types. The Book of the Giants, one of the constituent parts of the book of *Enoch*, written apparently in the third century BCE, is an apocalypse in which an angel reveals to Enoch astronomical and cosmological lore. In the book of *Jubilees*, written in the 160s BCE, an angel reveals to Moses the content of some heavenly tablets. As I discussed briefly above, *Jubilees* is basically a rewrite of the first part of the Torah, but one of its goals, if not its major goal, is to legitimate the solar calendar. In pre-Maccabean times, then, the content of apocalypses was mysteries of nature. This fact implies a connection between early apocalypse and wisdom (cf. Job 28). Apocalyptic literature never lost its interest in cosmology, but in response to the profanation of

the temple and the persecution of Judaism by Epiphanes, it shifted its attention to the secrets of history and eschatology. This type of apocalypse, whose best-known representative is the book of Daniel, marks the final evolution of classical prophecy.

Like classical prophecy, apocalypses are revelations from God that address some of the fundamental concerns of the human condition: life, death, fate, sin, and theodicy. Like the prophet, the visionary seeks to explain God's ways or laments his inability to do so. Many of the phrases, motifs, and ideas of the apocalypses derive from the classical prophets, so that even though the apocalyptic seers did not explicitly refer to their prophetic predecessors, they certainly looked upon themselves as their continuators. But if the eighth to sixth centuries BCE were the golden age of prophecy, the second and first centuries BCE were an age of silver, or perhaps bronze. Unlike prophets, apocalyptic seers are not direct intermediaries between humanity and God because they do not receive a direct revelation from God. They do not proclaim, "Thus says the LORD." Rather, they are reporting what was revealed to them by an angel, and it is the angel who now functions as an intermediary. Often the divine message is represented by an image or symbol. For the most part, these images are fantastic or extraterrestrial, and an angel reveals their meaning (e.g., Dan. 7). Unlike the prophet, the apocalyptic seer speaks neither publicly nor clearly. Even after the angel has spoken to the seer and explained the meaning of his vision, the message remains obscure; only the wise will understand it (Dan. 12). What was mysterious before the revelation is only slightly less mysterious after it.

Apocalypse is an esoteric literature; as *Fourth Ezra* says, it is intended only for the wise (yet Dan. 12:3 implies that the wise are supposed to communicate the revealed secrets to the people). Whether it is a sectarian literature is not clear because the social setting of the apocalyptic seers is unknown. The Jews of Qumran, at least, believed that they were living near the end time; they had a vivid interest in eschatological speculations, but they did not have much interest in apocalypses. They expressed their eschatological dreams in nonapocalyptic works like the *War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* and especially in their scriptural commentaries (*pesharim*; see below). In contrast, the early Christians were very interested in apocalypses; they preserved many Jewish apocalypses of the Second Temple period and wrote new apocalypses themselves. The prophets had the masses for their audience, but the apocalyptic seers had only the wise.

The implicit message of the apocalypses is that events on the cosmic or national scale have been predetermined by God but that individuals, forewarned by the vision, can ally themselves with the forces of God through repentance and righteousness. God's plan for world events was set centuries

or millennia before the current time, and there is nothing that humans can do now to affect its course. In particular, one view that became widespread was the theory of four empires, which postulated that either Israel or the world would come under the dominion of four successive empires, each worse than the previous. The final empire would launch a great persecution against God's elect, and amid that crisis the series of empires would come to an end as God and his hosts restore justice in the world. The theory was first enunciated by Daniel (chaps. 2 and 7) and exerted enormous influence on the Jews and Christians of antiquity and the Middle Ages. In this scheme, sin and righteousness, punishment and reward, obduracy and repentance—all are irrelevant because the series of empires was decreed by God to be part of the unchangeable cosmic order. Thus do the apocalyptic seers explain the nature of the crisis that currently besets "the righteous" and "the elect." Let them remain faithful to God, and they will prosper. This tension between fate or predetermination (for the nation or the world) and free will or repentance (for the individual) appears frequently in Second Temple and rabbinic Judaism (see chap. 3).

Unlike the prophetic books, which almost always are credited to their real authors, apocalyptic works *never* are. The works are either anonymous or, what is more often the case, *pseudepigraphic*, that is, falsely attributed to someone other than the real author (from the Greek *pseudo*, false, and *epigraphos*, ascription). This pseudepigraphy is not the result of the accidental and incorrect attribution of an anonymous work but is the result of deliberate misattribution by the author. Rather than admit their own identities, the authors of these works hid behind the masks of figures who lived at the very beginning of the world. Adam, Seth, Enoch, and Noah were special favorites, although later figures were sometimes used as well (e.g., Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, and Baruch).

(The term *pseudepigrapha*, like the term *apocrypha*, has been much abused. A few church fathers refer to "pseudepigraphic" works, that is, works that bear false ascriptions, and this is the meaning I accept. Modern scholars often use the phrase "the Pseudepigrapha" as a designation for those Jewish books that are found neither in the Tanak nor in "the Apocrypha"—except for Philo, Josephus, the Qumran scrolls, and the rabbinic works. Some of the works included in "the Pseudepigrapha" are in fact pseudepigraphic, but many are not. The result is confusion and the loss of the term "pseudepigraphic" as an accurate description for a specific literary phenomenon. The modern usage gained currency only in the twentieth century and is best avoided.[13])

Anonymity and pseudepigraphy are not restricted to apocalypses alone. Testaments, romances, commentaries, wisdom works, hymns, laws—all

13. My protests, alas, are in vain.

these were written anonymously or pseudonymously in late Second Temple times. The last Judean author known by name and writing in Hebrew is Ben Sira. Greek-speaking Jews were more willing than their Hebrew-speaking coreligionists to put their names on their works. This phenomenon can be explained in various ways; it can even be dismissed as inconsequential. Nevertheless, modern literary criticism suggests an attractive explanation. Every act of writing, and all the more so the arrogation of credit for what one has written, is a sign of hubris. A writer claims to have accomplished something in his work and challenges the reader to compare his work with that of his predecessors and competitors. Clement of Alexandria, a church father of the late second century CE, opens his most important work, the *Stromata*, or *Miscellanies*, with a long apology for daring to put his thoughts in writing. After all, the only book a Christian needs is the New Testament! But the heretics have already written their gospels, and why should Christians be able to read heretical gospels but not the Christian truth that Clement wishes to teach? In other words, Clement's hesitation to write is caused (in part) by his fear of competing with the Gospels. Perhaps Jews who wrote in the language of Moses and Isaiah felt the same way. How could they compete with the written Torah, with "Scripture"? In the third and fourth centuries CE, the rabbis stated that "the Oral Torah," the body of rabbinic laws and scriptural interpretations, was not to be written (or at least was not to be used in written form in the sessions of the rabbinic schools), because to do so would challenge the authority of the written Torah.[14] The apocalyptic seers, the epigones of the classical prophets, had enough courage to write their thoughts but not enough courage to assert their own identity.

But the apocalyptic seers were usually not content with mere anonymity; they generally practiced pseudepigraphy. The Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora attributed some of their literary products to distinguished pagans of the past, presumably because they wished to show that Judaism was a respected religion in the eyes of the greats. But the meaning of the pseudepigraphy practiced by the apocalyptic seers of the land of Israel is not as clear. It is unlikely that the authors were trying to deceive their readers or that their readers really were deceived. The predilection for antediluvian figures like Adam and Enoch suggests that the pseudepigraphy was intended to highlight the correspondence between the beginning and the end of time. Many eschatological schemes present the end of time as a new creation, and the pseudepigraphy allows the witnesses to the first creation to describe the second as well. It also emphasizes the idea that God has predetermined the course of human history and that all events are part of the cosmic order put in

14. *B. Gittin* 60b.

place at the creation of the world. But whatever its explanation, pseudepigraphy shows that the true identity of the apocalyptic seer was not important. A prophet had authority as an intermediary between humanity and God, but an apocalyptic seer did not.

From Prophets to Apocalyptic Seers and Holy Men

The transition from prophecy to apocalypse was already under way in the Persian period, as the prophecies of Zechariah demonstrate. Zechariah refers three times (1:4; 7:7, 12) to "the former prophets," thus indicating an awareness that one era has passed and that another is about to begin. Zechariah's contemporary Haggai still writes in classical style, declaiming, "Thus says the LORD of hosts," but Zechariah does not; it is the angel, not the prophet, who says, "Thus says the LORD" (e.g., Zech. 1:14–16). The prophet is being replaced by an angel as the intermediary figure, who transmits and interprets God's message. Similarly, when the prophet beholds an image or symbol, it is an angel, not God, who presents it and interprets it (e.g., Zech. 1:7–15). Some of the symbolic visions seen by Zechariah were fantastic and unreal, like those of the later apocalypses (e.g., Zech. 6). Later Jews believed that prophecy ceased in the Persian period. Josephus, *Fourth Ezra*, and the rabbis defined the biblical canon on the basis of their belief that "the accurate succession of the prophets" ceased around the time of Ezra. Even those Jews who had a broader or more fluid notion of canon (e.g., the Jews of Qumran and the Greek Jews who bequeathed their canon to the early church) did not preserve the words of any named prophet who lived after the reign of Artaxerxes.

The transformation was complete by the middle of the second century BCE. This period witnessed the shift in the focus of apocalypse from cosmology to theodicy and eschatology (see above) and also saw the canonization of the prophetic books. The same period likewise provides the first explicit testimony that many Jews believed that classical prophecy had ceased. In two passages, First Maccabees records that the Jews took a certain course of action that would remain valid "until a true prophet should appear" and instruct them otherwise (1 Macc. 4:46; 14:41 AT). True prophets were a phenomenon of the past and the future, not the present.

Prophecy evolved into apocalypse, and prophets became apocalyptic seers. Other heirs of the prophetic tradition were "holy men," miracle workers, "charismatic" healers, foretellers of the future, and mystics. From the second century BCE until the end of antiquity, figures of these types flourished. Prophets had always been regarded as "men of God," people endowed with unusual powers who were not to be molested in any way (Jer. 26). The performance of miracles and healings characterized prophecy's "preliterary" phase,

exemplified by Elijah and Elisha, but even the classical prophets performed healings on occasion (Isa. 38:21). Both Isaiah and Ezekiel, when being commissioned by God to assume their prophetic roles, beheld God sitting on his throne, surrounded by fiery angels, singing (according to Isaiah), "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts." These visions certainly can be called "mystical" (Isa. 6; Ezek. 1). Foretelling the future was always one of the most striking aspects of prophecy, so much so that in the popular imagination, even in antiquity, the two are virtually identical. The successors of the prophets continued these traditions.

Among the Greeks and Romans, the Jews had a well-deserved reputation as practitioners of magic and miracles, especially healings. Judean society in the first century BCE and the first century CE was marked by the presence of numerous predictors of the future, holy men, and healers. Many rabbis of the third and fourth centuries in both Israel and Babylonia were believed to be endowed with extraordinary powers. In some cases, these figures are said to be "prophets" or to possess the gift of prophecy. Admirers of John Hyrcanus credited him with the gift of prophecy because in two wondrous incidents he correctly foretold the future. The Jews of Galilee who beheld Jesus thought that he was "one of the prophets," probably because he performed many miracles (Matt. 16:14 and parallels). Although some of these people were called prophets, their authority and prestige, unless augmented from some other source (e.g., the position of high priest or judge), was much less than that enjoyed by the classical prophets. The image of Jesus in the Gospels and in later Christian tradition has been shaped by the belief that classical prophecy had returned and that Jesus was a prophet like Moses, but it is difficult to know to what extent these ideas derive from Jesus' contemporaries. (And of course, Jesus was also viewed by his followers as king, high priest, Messiah, and "Son of God.")

Scriptural Interpretation

The canonization of the Tanak meant the creation of a scripturally oriented society. People studied Scripture, memorized it, and tried to live by it. In order to understand God's ways, they meditated on it. When praying, they quoted from it liberally, and in their public liturgies they read it and studied it. They sought the meaning of current events not through the writing of histories but through the study of Scripture. (Only Greek-speaking Jews like Josephus wrote histories; one thousand years would elapse after the composition of First Maccabees before a Jew wrote another history in Hebrew.[15])

15. I am referring to Yosippon (tenth century, Italy), an anonymous Hebrew history that is largely a paraphrase of the works of Josephus.

Law, theology, eschatology—everything could be found within the pages of scripture.

Within Judaism, the role of the Tanak, and especially the Torah, bears a superficial analogy to the role of Homer within Greco-Roman culture. All Greeks and Romans knew at least something of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The educated knew the poems by heart, studied them closely, cited them liberally in their conversations, drew inspiration from them in their writings, and labored long and hard to establish their correct texts and to clarify their numerous obscurities. Greek literature begins with Homer; Roman literature begins with the translation of Homer into Latin in the third century BCE. The similarities between all this and the place of the Tanak within Judaism are numerous and striking. All Jews knew at least something of the Tanak, especially the Torah. The educated knew it by heart, studied it closely, cited it liberally in their conversations, drew inspiration from it in their writings, and labored long and hard to establish its correct text and to clarify its numerous obscurities. Jewish literature begins with the Tanak; the literature of Greek-speaking Jews begins with the translation of the Torah into Greek in the third century BCE.

But here the similarities end because, except for a few philosophers, the Greeks and Romans did not look upon Homer as a guide to life, a source of law and custom, a "constitution," or a text to be absorbed and "internalized." They did not see it as eternally valid and existentially meaningful. For the Jews, the Tanak was all these and more; it was the Word of God, whose study brought one closer to God, and the observance of whose dictates brought immeasurable rewards. As Josephus remarks, Jews were prepared to die for their Torah, but what Greek was prepared to die for the classics of Greek literature?[16]

When the Jews studied and interpreted the Bible, they were not reading a uniform document. Not all books of the Bible were created equal. The Torah clearly ranked (and ranks) the highest. It was canonized first and placed at the head. It provided the texts for the weekly lections in the synagogue. It was written by Moses, the servant of God and the greatest of the prophets. Philo is interested only in the Torah and seldom quotes any other biblical book. Perhaps he regarded the prophets as divinely inspired, but he paid them almost no heed. Similarly, the rabbis of the third and fourth centuries state that law can be derived only from the Torah, not from the Prophets or the Writings, although the rabbis certainly believed that all three parts of the Bible were divinely inspired. The early Christians probably accepted the primacy of the Torah yet accorded the Prophets and the Writings a much higher place than

16. Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.8 §§44–45.

the rabbis did, not only in matters of theology and eschatology but also in ritual practice.[17]

Nevertheless, the primacy of the Torah did not mean that there was no ambiguity about its status. In the first part of this chapter, I routinely used the phrase "divinely inspired or revealed" when describing the books of the Bible, especially the Torah. There is a substantial difference between these ideas. The first emphasizes the importance of Moses in the writing of the Torah. Greek Jews regularly referred to Moses as their "lawgiver" and to the Torah as their "constitution" (*politeia*), just as rabbinic Jews called Moses "our master" or "our teacher" (*rabbenu*).[18] Moses wrote the Torah but did so while inspired by God, just as the other prophets are responsible for their own words. This conception allows human agency a substantial role in the creation and transmission of the divine message. The second idea emphasizes the status of the Torah as the revealed word of God; thus many works of the Second Temple and rabbinic periods cite the Torah, and indeed other books of the Tanak, as the Word of God. "Scripture says" and "God says" are synonymous expressions. It is not the human agent who is speaking in these pages, but God. This conception allows human agency a relatively small role in the creation and transmission of the divine message.[19]

I do not know of any text of the Second Temple period that addresses this question explicitly, but some texts address it implicitly. In certain passages Philo, for example, argues that the Torah must be of divine origin because it is perfect; elsewhere he argues that the Torah must be perfect because it is of divine origin. The first perspective sees the divine origin of the Torah as a consequence of its perfection. Moses, the great lawgiver and philosopher, wrote a perfect law; Philo's essay that develops this point of view, the *Life of Moses*, omits the epiphany at Mount Sinai because belief in the divine origin of the Torah does not depend on it. The second perspective sees the divine origin of the Torah as the source of its perfection; the Torah was not merely divinely inspired but also revealed. This perspective appears frequently in Philo's commentaries on the Torah.

But whether inspired or revealed, the text of Scripture had to be interpreted. Does the act of interpretation uncover meanings that were present all along, or does it add new meanings to the text? Were Moses and the prophets merely the vehicles for a message they may not have fully understood? On these weighty matters, too, there were contrasting opinions. Throughout his

17. Rabbis: *b. Bava Qamma* 2b; *y. Hallah* 1.1 57b. Early Christians: e.g., Matt. 12:3–4, contrasted with 12:5–6.

18. *B. Berakhot* 3b.

19. Cf. Mark 7:10 ("Moses said"), parallel to Matt. 15:4 ("God said"). The expressions are synonymous.

essays Philo assumes that Moses was aware of the full range of meanings of the words of the Torah, both the literal and the philosophical, both the exoteric and the esoteric. The talmudic rabbis state that "any novelty which a student might advance while studying with his master was already dictated [by God] to Moses at Mount Sinai."[20] In contrast, when interpreting Habakkuk 2:1–2, the Jews of Qumran declared, "God told Habakkuk to write down things that are going to come upon the last generation, but the fulfillment of the end time he did not make known to him." In other words, Habakkuk did not fully understand his own prophecies! According to a rabbinic story, one day Moses returned from the next world in order to sit in the academy of Rabbi Aqiva. Although he was unable to understand the lecture, he was relieved to hear the rabbi conclude with the remark that the entire contents of the lecture derived from the Sinaitic revelation to Moses. In the perspective of this story, Moses himself did not appreciate the full import of the words he wrote.[21] Similarly the rabbis never precisely defined the relationship of the "Oral Torah" to the written; does the oral derive from the written, supplement it, or interpret it? The answer is all three.

Perhaps as a result of this debate among ancient Jewish thinkers, some literary works are completely autonomous of the Tanak, seldom quoting it or referring to it, while other works are completely dependent on it. For example, contrast the apocalypses, which as a rule (Dan. 9 is an exception) do not present themselves as the "fulfillments" of biblical prophecies, with the Qumran *pesharim*, which describe the eschatological hopes of the Qumran group through scriptural exegesis. Contrast the Mishnah, which presents its laws with only few references to the Torah, with various other rabbinic works, which have as their goal the demonstration that the laws of the Mishnah can be derived exegetically from the Torah. The same contrast can sometimes be observed in Greek Jewish literature as well. In most of his essays, Philo connects his theological and moral teachings with scriptural verses and episodes, but in several essays he does not, although he certainly could have done so had he wished.

These questions are important for an understanding of the self-definition of ancient Judaism, but they cannot be pursued here. Even if the Jews of antiquity believed that God authorized humans to add to the revelation contained in Scripture or to ferret out meanings that were unknown to the original authors, this belief did not detract from the unique status of Scripture, especially the Torah. Jews could not hope to write new works that would

20. *Y. Pe'ah* 2:6 17a.
21. *B. Menahot* 29b.

equal those of Scripture, but they could gain mastery over Scripture by interpreting it.

Modes of Scriptural Interpretation

The Hebrew word *midrash* literally means "research" or "investigation," but through rabbinic usage the term has come to mean "the investigation of Scripture." A commentary on Scripture, a piece of scriptural exegesis, a veiled allusion to a scriptural passage, a retelling of scriptural material—all these are called *midrash* (pl. *midrashim*). The term has become so popular in recent years that in modern parlance it is virtually synonymous with "exegesis," and any textual interpretation that is not absolutely true to its source is dubbed "midrash." (And since, according to modern literary critics, no textual interpretation can be absolutely true to its source, all textual interpretation is midrash.)

Since the term "midrash" is so slippery and vague, I shall avoid it here, preferring instead to use more specific English terms like commentary, allusion, exegesis, and allegory. However, the history of the term is significant. The noun *midrash* appears twice in the Tanak, in each case as the title of a (lost) work cited by the Chronicler: "the *midrash* of Iddo the prophet" (2 Chr. 13:22 AT) and "the *midrash* of the book of the kings" (24:27 AT). The term probably should be translated here "story" or "history." The Greek word *historia* has the same literal meaning as the Hebrew *midrash*, "research" or "investigation," but while the Greek word came to mean "an investigation into the past," hence "a work that presents the results of research into the past," the Hebrew term came to mean "investigation into Scripture," hence "a work that presents the results of research into Scripture." In Chronicles the term seems to have a meaning akin to what would become normal in Greek but fell from Hebrew usage.

The verb *darash*, from which the noun *midrash* derives, also undergoes an important shift. Biblical Hebrew often refers to people "seeking" God, or "inquiring" of God, or "searching" for God. Sometimes the phrase clearly means "to seek an oracle from God."[22] The verb used is *darash*. But in two texts of the Persian (or early Hellenistic) period, the object of the verb no longer is God. "For Ezra had set his heart to study [*lidrosh*] the Torah of the LORD" (Ezra 7:10). "Salvation is far from the wicked, for they do not seek your statutes" (Ps. 119:155). Ezra seeks not God but the Torah of God. The wicked are accused not of failing to seek God (Isa. 9:13 [12]; Jer. 10:21), but of failing to seek his statutes. With the canonization of the Torah, Jews no longer seek God directly. They seek God through the Torah. That process is midrash.

22. See, e.g., Gen. 25:22; Exod. 18:15; 1 Sam. 9:9.

The essence of exegesis is the notion "X = Y." When Scripture says X, it really means Y. In some instances the formula can be represented as "X + Y," where the exegesis adds Y to the X of Scripture. What distinguishes one mode of exegesis from another is the nature of the "Xs" (that is, what sorts of passages and difficulties prompt exegesis?), the method by which the X is demonstrated to be equivalent to the Y, and the nature of the "Ys" (that is, what is the exegesis supposed to accomplish?). Usually exegesis is prompted by some sort of difficulty: two laws or narratives seem to contradict each other; the heroes of Scripture act in a manner unbecoming their piety and grandeur; the scriptural account seems dull, trivial, obscure, pointless, or absurd, and so on.

Problems of this sort proved equally bothersome to the Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora and to the Hebrew-speaking Jews of the land of Israel. The earliest known exegete from the Diaspora, a Jew named Demetrius who lived in Egypt in the second half of the third century BCE, is disturbed by the apparent inconsistency in biblical chronology and does his best to prove that Jacob was able to sire all his children in the time allotted him by Genesis, and that Zipporah, the descendant of Abraham through Keturah, really was of the same generation as her husband, Moses. Demetrius's concern for exactitude in biblical chronology and genealogy also appears in various works of the land of Israel (notably *Jubilees* and some rabbinic works). In another passage, Demetrius asks how the Israelites, who fled Egypt unarmed, managed to obtain weapons for their various battles. His answer (they obtained arms by stripping them from the Egyptian corpses at the Red Sea) is a good illustration of the X + Y method, in which the exegete adds important information omitted by Scripture. The same technique is frequently found throughout the exegetical works of the land of Israel as well. Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic works add details to Scripture to make it more colorful, dramatic, and exciting.[23]

Perhaps the most radical function of scriptural exegesis was that it allowed Jews to affirm undying loyalty to a text written centuries earlier for a very different society, living under very different conditions. They could claim loyalty to the sacred text even as they freed themselves from it by interpreting it. A living culture cannot live in accordance with the dictates of an immovable text. Either a way must be found to introduce flexibility into the text, or the text sooner or later will need to be rejected. In the United States, the interpretations of the Supreme Court allow the government to function in accordance with a document written by a group of eighteenth-century politicians. The Supreme Court interprets the Constitution but of course routinely

23. See, e.g., the *Jewish Antiquities* of Josephus, the *Testament of Levi*, and the *Genesis Apocryphon* from Qumran.

interprets it in a manner that would have amazed the Founding Fathers. No matter. Historians must try to determine what the Constitution meant in its eighteenth-century context, but the Supreme Court must determine what it means for contemporary society. Rather than write a new constitution every few generations, the United States authorizes the Supreme Court to misinterpret the Constitution for the common good. Similarly, the Jews of antiquity routinely misinterpreted (the usual euphemism is "reinterpreted") Scripture to remove laws and ideas they found objectionable and to introduce laws and ideas that answered their own needs. The Jews of the Greek Diaspora had different needs from those of the land of Israel, and so their scriptural interpretations often seem quite different, but they both are following the same process.

Characteristic of the Diaspora Jews is their desire to make the Torah appear philosophically respectable and reasonable. Aristobulus, a Greek Jew of the second century BCE, is bothered by the Torah's anthropomorphic, and decidedly unphilosophical, conception of God. Philo finds it impossible to believe that Moses spent forty days and nights with God only to return with a book filled with unedifying stories about the domestic troubles of one ancient clan; obviously the stories of Genesis about the patriarchs must be trying to reveal something significant. For Philo, the stories, when properly decoded, are about the ascent of the soul from the world of matter to the world of the archetypes and the Monad. The episodes in the lives of the patriarchs are way stations in the journey of the soul. The laws too, which at first glance seem strange and unreasonable, can be made to yield their inner meaning. Thus, already in the *Letter of Aristeas*, there is the explanation that the prohibited foods represent wicked individuals whose vices must be avoided, just as the permitted foods represent righteous individuals whose virtues must be pursued. For Philo, the laws not only represent moral qualities to be avoided or pursued; they also teach philosophical principles about God and his creation: the laws of the Torah are consonant with the laws of nature as established by God at the creation of the world.

The identification of biblical laws and heroes with philosophical principles and moral qualities is known as *allegory*. This type of exegesis found a secure home in Christianity and became one of the favored ways for explaining why Christians do not obey the laws of the Old Testament. Since Christians obey the allegorical meaning of the laws (the "Y"), they need not obey the literal meaning (the "X"). In fact, some Christian polemicists in the second century argued that the laws were never even intended to be followed literally![24] Philo knew allegorists who advanced the same argument, and against them

24. See esp. the *Epistle of Barnabas*.

he insisted that allegorical meaning does not negate literal meaning. The commandment of circumcision represents the excision of lustful inclinations, but even if you excise your lustful tendencies, you must still circumcise your eight-day-old son.[25] For Philo, Scripture has various levels of meaning, both external (the literal) and internal (the allegorical), that are not mutually exclusive. The rabbis agreed with Philo that Scripture has levels of meaning, but they, like their compatriots in the Second Temple period, did not as a rule engage in allegorical exegesis. The unphilosophical image of God and the unreasonableness of the scriptural laws did not bother the Jews of the land of Israel, and so they had little need for allegory.

The Jews of the land of Israel, much more than the Jews of the Diaspora, devoted their exegetical energies to details of the laws of the Torah. This activity is well represented at Qumran, in the book of *Jubilees*, in some of the dispute stories in the Gospel tradition, and of course throughout rabbinic literature. In numerous matters, the laws outlined by the Torah were impractical or inadequate or problematic because customs and society had radically changed. New institutions and rituals existed that were not even mentioned by the Torah. One of the tasks of exegesis was to set these matters right: to reconcile Torah law with the legal, social, and institutional reality of the Second Temple period and, later, of the rabbinic period as well.

Also characteristic of the exegesis of the land of Israel is the effort to affirm the continuing validity of the biblical prophecies and narratives by discovering contemporary situations through which they were fulfilled. The biblical texts contain *types* or *paradigms*. The exodus from Egypt is a type for all future redemptions, just as the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar is a type for all future destructions. These events are not unique occurrences but recur in different ways throughout later history. For example, the desecration of the temple by Epiphanes, the conquest of Jerusalem by the Romans in 63 BCE, and its destruction in 70 CE—all were seen by many Jews as "replays" of the events of 587 BCE. Antiochus and Vespasian were the new Nebuchadnezzars, the Syrians and the Romans were the new Babylonians, and so on. Typological exegesis plays an important role in the New Testament and in rabbinic Judaism.

By the same logic, the prophecies were believed to refer not to a single set of events but to future times as well. The only trick was to figure out which prophecies were valid for the contemporary situation. Sometimes it was easy; Josephus remarks that Jeremiah predicted the destruction of Jerusalem that took place "in our day."[26] Usually, however, it was much more difficult. The

25. Philo, *On the Migration of Abraham* 16 §§89–93.
26. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 10.5.1 §79.

early Christians believed that the messianic prophecies of Isaiah were "fulfilled" through Jesus, but most other Jews did not agree. In their *pesharim*, the Jews of Qumran argued that the prophecies of Habakkuk and Nahum, as well as the "prophecies" of the Psalms, were fulfilled by events in the sect's history—and would be further fulfilled by the sect's imminent rise to glory and destruction of its enemies. Jews outside of Qumran rejected this exegesis. All Jews agreed that the words of the prophets contained eternal verities—this belief is one of the hallmarks of canonization—but which verity referred to the events of the day was a question that aroused some dispute.

Many of these exegetical techniques and concerns are to be found in Scripture itself. Scriptural authors borrow motifs and ideas from each other, and in the process they reinterpret them. Throughout the Tanak, interpolators and redactors have tried to minimize contradictions, clarify obscurities, and remove theological difficulties. The people who preserved the constituent documents of the Torah and the words of the prophets must have had means for interpreting them. In other words, biblical interpretation has a long history in ancient Israel even before the final canonization, but canonization made interpretation inevitable and distinct. Inevitable, because how can one accept the unity of a book that abounds in apparent contradictions and obscurities unless one engages in exegesis? How can one accept the authority of a book that abounds in laws and ideas that seem offensive and unedifying unless one engages in exegesis? Distinct, because the canonization of Scripture no longer permitted the incorporation of interpolations and glosses into Scripture. Interpretation, now a distinct enterprise, adopted a character of its own, sometimes amazingly free, almost frivolous; at other times very earnest, almost pedantic. All Jews who affirmed the validity of Scripture had to engage in exegesis. They did not always agree—the Sadducees rejected the traditions of the Pharisees—but all were involved in the same activity.

Scriptural exegesis is scattered throughout all the literary remains of ancient Judaism. I conclude this chapter with a brief survey of the three literary genres that are the most direct consequence of scriptural interpretation: translation, paraphrase, and commentary.

Translation

The earliest translation of the Bible was the *Septuagint*. According to the story that was in circulation by the end of the second century BCE, king Ptolemy Philadelphus (285–246 BCE), the Macedonian king of Egypt, wished the royal library to have a copy of the sacred law of the Jews and invited seventy-two scholars (hence the name *Septuagint*, Latin for seventy) to travel from Jerusalem to Alexandria in order to translate the Torah into Greek. This the scholars did, and the resulting work found favor not only with the king but

also with the Jews of Alexandria. Most scholars regard this legend as Jewish propaganda and assume that the Jews of Alexandria needed the translation for themselves, because so many of them no longer knew enough Hebrew to read and study the Torah in the original. In the course of the following centuries, the other books of the Tanak were translated as well, and the whole work, with the inclusion of some books whose Hebrew originals have not been preserved or which were originally written in Greek, is popularly (if inaccurately) known as the Septuagint (frequently abbreviated LXX).

The very existence of this translation is significant because it implies that Judaism was a "book" religion. Few other ancient peoples translated their sacred literatures into Greek or Latin, apparently because they did not feel the need to do so. Judaism was becoming a religion based on Scripture, and the Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria made a great concession to modernity and necessity when they translated the Torah into a language that all could understand. The purpose of the translation, then, was not to make Judaism accessible to non-Jews but to make it accessible to Jews, and in all likelihood this same purpose governed the production of most of the Greco-Jewish literature that followed the Septuagint. Josephus paraphrased Scripture in the *Jewish Antiquities* and may have been trying to make Judaism appear attractive to outsiders, but the Septuagint translation was aimed at an internal, Jewish audience.

The Jews of the Eastern Diaspora and, to some extent of the land of Israel as well, needed a translation too, not a translation into Greek but into Aramaic. These translations are known as *Targumim* (or Targums; singular, *Targum*). Rabbinic tradition, based on Nehemiah 8:7–8, attributes the genesis of these translations to Ezra, but whether this is correct, we have no way of knowing.[27] The earliest extant Targum is the translation of Job found among the Qumran scrolls. Jewish manuscript tradition preserves several different Targumim of the Torah, one complete Targum for the Prophets and Writings and fragments of various others. Like the Septuagint, the Targumim apparently originated in a liturgical setting. Instead of, or in addition to, the reading of the Torah in Hebrew, the lection was read in translation, to make the Word of God accessible to all. In recent years, many scholars have used these Targumim as a window into Jewish piety of the first century of our era, but none of the extant Targumim (except for the one from Qumran) reached its current form before the early Middle Ages, and there is no reason to assume that every exegetical twist and turn is the residue of ancient tradition. Like the rest of rabbinic literature, the Targumim are collective works, written over a long span of time.

27. *B. Megillah* 3a.

The Septuagint and some of the Targumim (notably *Targum Onqelos*) are "word-for-word" translations. The translators seldom paraphrase or expand the text; obscurities are left obscure, and tantalizing references are left to tantalize. In the first century CE, after the emergence in the land of Israel of a new standard text of the Tanak, some Jews felt that the Septuagint was no longer accurate enough, and they began to revise it to make it conform more closely to the text as it had developed. This activity continued in the second century, with the result that by the time of the church father Origen (first half of the third century), several different Greek translations of the Tanak were extant; Origen, for the sake of the church, edited them and tried to clarify their differences. Hebrew-speaking and Aramaic-speaking Jews had no use for any of these translations and abandoned them to the Christians. For the Christians, who knew little Hebrew, the Septuagint became the Old Testament. Some Jews in the sixth century were still using Aquila, one of the second-century revisions of the Septuagint, but how numerous these Jews were is a difficult question.

Some of the Aramaic translations (notably *Targum Jonathan*), however, are very free. They may translate one verse rather closely only to expand radically in the next (additions are much more characteristic than omissions). There is absolutely no reason to think that these "free" Targumim are later than those that are consistently faithful to the text. The two different types of Targumim are the products of different theories of translation. At a certain point, free translations are indistinguishable from paraphrases.

Paraphrase

The social setting for translations is the liturgy; in synagogues and other places of public worship, Scripture was read and studied in the original and in translation. Paraphrases, by contrast, seem to have folk piety as their original setting. Schoolteachers and tellers of tales would rewrite the stories and laws of Scripture, embroidering and elaborating as they went. From folk piety, these elaborations entered the literary genres of the elite.

Unlike translations, paraphrases do not follow the original word for word. Some paraphrases preserve the words of the original but overlay them with so many additions and expansions that they are no longer easily recognizable. Numerous works of the Second Temple period, whether written in Hebrew (e.g., *Jubilees*, the *Temple Scroll*, Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*), Aramaic (the *Genesis Apocryphon*), or Greek (e.g., Artapanus, the *Jewish Antiquities* of Josephus, Philo's *Life of Moses*), are paraphrases of scripture. Even more numerous are the works containing sections that paraphrase Scripture (e.g., the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*). Unless they consult the original text, readers of a paraphrase have no way of knowing when the paraphrase

is following its original with reasonable fidelity and when it is not. Pseudo-Philo, for example, adds to the book of Judges a saga featuring the heroism of Kenaz. Artapanus adds to the Torah an involved story about Moses' invasion of Ethiopia; Josephus has a somewhat different version of the same tale, with the notable addition of a beautiful princess who marries the hero (is this the origin of the story? see Num. 12:1). The *Genesis Apocryphon* adds numerous wonderful episodes to the lives of Noah and Abraham. Some of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* invent great military exploits for the sons of Jacob. Aside from major expansions of Scripture, these paraphrases also introduce numerous minor changes (additions, omissions, modifications). A paraphrase need not be a free retelling of its source, but most of the extant paraphrases take great liberties with sacred writ. The canonization of Scripture set free the wellsprings of the imagination.

The rabbis of antiquity avoided scriptural paraphrase. They wrote and preserved Targumim and commentaries but not paraphrases. Not until the Middle Ages did the paraphrase style begin to make an impact on rabbinic literature. Why this is so is not clear.

Commentary

A commentary is characterized by the fact that it stands outside its source text and is subordinate to it. A commentary quotes its source text (the quotation or heading is called a *lēmma*, Greek for "something that is taken"), discusses it, and then proceeds to the next text. The lemma might be long or short, a whole paragraph or a single word. The demarcation between text and commentary is clear. In contrast, a translation and a paraphrase do not relate explicitly to the source text; they are independent works that, from a literary point of view, replace their source text. A commentary has a different atmosphere about it altogether. Translations derive from a liturgical setting; paraphrases derive (apparently) from folk piety, from tellers of tales; commentaries derive from schools, the learned elite.

Jews probably learned to write commentaries from the Greeks. Commentaries on Homer and other "canonical" authors were staples of Hellenistic scholarship, and the first Greek Jewish exegete, the Demetrius mentioned above (who is more an "essayist" than a "commentator"), shows the influence of the Hellenistic literary form. The earliest extant commentaries are the *pesharim* from Qumran, which comment not on the Torah but on some of the Prophets and the Psalms. Many of Philo's essays are written in commentary form, all of them treating the Torah exclusively. The rabbis, too, at first wrote commentaries only on the Torah. The earliest rabbinic commentaries are on Exodus–Deuteronomy. Later they added Genesis (the initial omission of Genesis would have astonished Philo) and some of the other biblical books

(mostly those that were used in the liturgy). The earliest commentary on the entire Hebrew Bible was written by a Babylonian rabbi in the tenth century.[28]

CONCLUSION

Jewish literature of the Second Temple period was the product of two contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, the Jews sensed that they were living in a postclassical age and that it was their duty to collect, venerate, and study the works of their great ancestors. This tendency ultimately yielded the Bible and the idea that classical prophecy had ceased. On the other hand, the sense that they could not compete with their past, because their ancestors were giants but they themselves were but dwarfs, impelled them to express their literary creativity in new forms: apocalypses, testaments, romances, histories, poems, hymns, oracles, translations, paraphrases, commentaries, and other genres. Social and religious change accompanied literary change. Prophets were replaced by apocalyptic seers, healers, and magic men; priests were replaced by scribes and lay scholars; the temple was replaced by sects; and sacrifices were replaced by prayer and Torah study. Theology and eschatology also underwent revolutionary change. All of this religious and social ferment is the result of a quest for new ways to find God. The Jews were living in an age of silver but were seeking gold.

28. R. Saadia Gaon (882–942 CE).

7

The Emergence of Rabbinic Judaism

As I explained in chapter 1, for the purposes of this book the "rabbinic period" begins in 70 CE and ends in the sixth century CE. Historians of the ancient world usually refer to these centuries as "late antiquity" because they mark the end of the classical world. During this period, the Roman Empire declined and fell, polytheism was replaced by Christianity as the official religion of the state, and the institutions and social patterns that characterized the world of antiquity were replaced by those that would characterize the medieval world. For historians of Judaism, these centuries also mark the end of one world and the beginning of another. The shift from Second Temple Judaism to rabbinic Judaism is not a mere chronological transition but a substantive change. In this chapter, I shall briefly assess the nature of this change.

THE RABBIS AND THE RABBINIC PERIOD

The title "Rabbi" designates a member of the select society that, between the second and the sixth centuries CE, produced the Mishnah and numerous related works, notably the Talmud of the land of Israel, known as the Yerushalmi, and the Talmud of Babylonia, known as the Bavli (the plural of Talmud is Talmudim [Hebrew] or Talmuds [English]). Linked by their common education, vocabulary, values, and culture, the rabbis clearly constitute a unified group. Rabbinic literature is a remarkably homogeneous corpus. If by some magic we could deposit a second-century Galilean rabbi in a fifth-century Babylonian academy, he certainly would need to make several adjustments (not least because Babylonian Aramaic and Galilean Aramaic are different dialects) yet would soon feel at home. Because of these facts, rabbinic texts have

usually been studied as if they constitute one seamless whole, as if all the works together constitute "the" Oral Torah. These facts have allowed me throughout this book to refer collectively to "the rabbis" and "the rabbinic period."

But these facts do not mean that rabbinic literature really is seamless or that all rabbis of antiquity thought and behaved in identical fashion. The homogeneity of the rabbinic corpus is offset to some extent by geographical, chronological, and literary diversity. Works produced in the land of Israel have certain distinctive characteristics missing from works of Babylonian provenance and vice versa. Every generation of rabbis had its own interests. In particular, the rabbis of the second century, known as *Tannaim* (lit., "repeaters," or "teachers"), who produced the Mishnah and other Tannaitic works, must be distinguished from the rabbis of the third to fifth centuries, known as *Amoraim* (lit., "speakers"), who produced the two Talmudim and other Amoraic works. Each document within the rabbinic "canon" has its own characteristic methods, themes, and message.

An accurate interpretation of rabbinic Judaism requires an assessment of both sets of facts, both the unity and the diversity. Much of this scholarly work is just now being done. In the following discussion, I shall continue to refer to "the rabbis," "the rabbinic period," and "rabbinic literature," but I shall also try to identify some of the distinctive characteristics of the rabbinic Judaism of the second century and of the major literary monument of that Judaism, the Mishnah.

WHAT IS THE MISHNAH?

The Mishnah ("repetition" or "teaching") is the first rabbinic book, written in Hebrew and edited around 200 CE. The work is anonymous and lacks a preface; nowhere does the author, widely assumed to have been Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, address his readership or explain the purpose or setting of the work. The Mishnah contains primarily material of a legal character: anonymous rulings, rulings ascribed to named sages, and debates between sages. The Mishnah also contains anecdotes, maxims, exhortations, scriptural exegesis, and descriptions of the rituals of the Jerusalem temple. The sages named in the Mishnah are customarily assigned by modern scholars to distinct generations; the bulk of the sages named in the Mishnah belong to either the generation of Yavneh (ca. 80–120 CE) or the generation of Usha (ca. 140–180 CE). Relatively little material is ascribed to named figures who lived before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70.

The Mishnah covers a broad range of topics and is divided into six sections known as "orders"; each order in turn is divided into "tractates." There

are sixty-three tractates in all. The six orders are: *Zeraim* ("Seeds"), on the disposition of the agricultural products of the land of Israel; *Moʿed* ("Feasts" or "Appointed Times"), on the festivals and pilgrimage to the temple; *Nashim* ("Women"), on marriage, divorce, and family law; *Neziqin* ("Damages"), on civil and criminal law and judicial procedure; *Qodashim* ("Holy Things"), on temple sacrifices and rituals; and *Tohorot* ("Purities"), on the maintenance of ritual purity and the removal of ritual impurity.

The Mishnah is full of legal material but is not a law code. Rather, it is a digest or anthology; indeed, it resembles the *Digest* of Roman law published by the emperor Justinian in 533 CE. Both works are topical collections of legal dicta ascribed to various authorities who lived for the most part in the second and early third centuries CE. Neither work is a law code, since each contains historical reminiscences and narratives, quotations from Homer (in the *Digest*) or the Torah (in the Mishnah), polemics, and of course, divergent opinions. But each work is a source of law; each work contains material from which later jurists could derive legal rulings.

The Mishnah constructs legal categories, which often appear to be theoretical and abstruse, and then discusses, usually in great detail, the precise definitions and limits of those categories. It creates lists of analogous legal phenomena and then proceeds to define and analyze every item on the list. It posits legal principles and devotes much attention to those objects, cases, or times that seem to be subject to more than one principle at once, or perhaps to none of the principles at all. These modes of thinking and writing, which can be characterized as *scholastic*, are endemic to the Mishnah, from one end to the other, and are not found in any pre-Mishnaic Jewish document. They will be developed further in the Talmudim.

FROM SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM TO RABBINIC JUDAISM

Within a span of seventy years, the Jews of Israel suffered two major disasters. As a result of the war of 66–70 CE, the temple was destroyed, Jerusalem was devastated, hundreds of thousands of people were killed or enslaved, and throughout the country, land and property were confiscated by the Romans. The effects of the Bar Kokhba war (132–135 CE) were equally serious. Judea was ruined, thousands of people were killed or enslaved, the Romans rebuilt Jerusalem as a pagan city and renamed the country Palestine ("land of the Philistines") instead of Judea ("land of the Jews"). In many respects, Second Temple Judaism had already laid the foundations for Judaism without a temple, a priesthood, and a sacrificial cult, but in others it had not, and

adjustments were now required. Following the order of chapters 2 to 6 of this book, I shall briefly compare the dominant patterns of rabbinic Judaism with those of the Second Temple period.

Relations with Gentiles

Rabbinic attitudes toward political, cultural, and social relations with gentiles were substantially identical with those established by Second Temple Judaism. The two disasters confirmed the political wisdom of Jeremiah. Armed rebellion would not free the Jews from the grip of their gentile rulers. Instead, they were to pray for the peace of the state in which they lived and await the deliverance that would come from God at the appointed time. Perhaps a few rabbis supported Bar Kokhba, but most did not. The rabbinic stories about the wars of 66–70 and 132–135 depict the revolutionaries as misguided fools or wicked sinners. The righteous Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai fled the city of Jerusalem during the siege and hailed Vespasian as the emperor and conqueror. Collaboration with the enemy was no sin if the enemy was granted dominion by God and if the enemy's Jewish opponents were themselves sinners. (The rabbis debated to what extent they could or should collaborate with the Romans, but the principle of collaborating was clearly established.) The Jews had no choice but to accept the divine decree.

Many scholars have suggested that as a result of the disasters of 70 and 135 CE, the rabbis turned their backs on the outside world and isolated themselves from gentiles and gentile culture. The matter is not so simple, however. The beauty of Japheth (Hellenism) dwelt in the tents of Shem (rabbinic Judaism), as the Talmud says.[1] The Mishnah contains hundreds of Greek and Latin words, and the Talmudim and other works add hundreds more. Some of the rabbinic modes of argumentation and scholarly analysis are those of Hellenistic rhetoricians. One of the major forms of rabbinic literary expression, the commentary, is of Greek origin, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Rabbinic ethics closely resemble those of the Stoics. Even the "chain of tradition," by which the rabbis traced their spiritual ancestry back to Moses, is modeled on the chains of tradition that the Greek philosophical schools constructed to demonstrate their descent from their founding sages (Plato, Aristotle, et al.). These parallels and many others like them prove that the rabbis were not isolated from the cultural currents of their society and that, in their own way, they were a typical group of scholars and philosophers doing what scholars and philosophers were supposed to do. Thus the rabbis certainly were "hellenized" to some extent.

1. *B. Megillah* 9b. See chap. 2 above.

But just as much evidence can be marshaled on the other side of the argument. It is unlikely that any rabbi in antiquity ever read Plato or Aristotle (who are never mentioned anywhere in rabbinic literature); some rabbis clearly never even heard of them. No rabbi evinces any knowledge of any of the technical jargon of Greek philosophy. Perhaps some rabbis knew enough Greek to communicate with Roman officials and with Greek-speaking Jews, but we may be sure that few rabbis acquired real facility with the language. And most important, the content of the Mishnah and the Talmudim is so unlike anything in classical literature that it is difficult to imagine that their authors were active participants in classical culture.

The degree of rabbinic isolation from gentiles also is not easy to determine. The rabbis freely accepted converts to Judaism, even if they no longer sought them actively. Some rabbis had negative attitudes toward converts, but the dominant view was positive. Rabbinic literature is filled with disparaging remarks about pagans and paganism. The Mishnah devotes an entire tractate (*Avodah Zarah*) to the rules that Jews must observe in order not to derive benefit from any object which might have been used for idolatrous purposes (cf. Paul's ruling about meat sacrificed to idols [1 Cor. 8]). These rules are part of a larger effort to inhibit social (and sexual) intercourse between Jews and gentiles. Whether all this represents a distinct turning inward in the wake of the destruction of the temple is not so clear. Many Jews of the Second Temple period, even of the Diaspora, would have agreed with the rabbinic disparagement of paganism and the effort to erect social barriers between Jews and gentiles.

An indication of a more ecumenical attitude toward gentiles and paganism is the notion of "Noahide laws" that was elaborated by the rabbis of the second century.[2] Righteous gentiles need not convert to Judaism in order to have a share in the world to come. They need obey only a certain basic minimum, which God revealed to Noah and which was to be observed by all of Noah's descendants, namely gentiles. The rabbis debated among themselves the number and identity of these laws (the usual number was seven). According to the dominant view, one of these laws was the prohibition of idolatry, which meant that a pagan had to deny paganism in order to attain salvation in the hereafter. Nevertheless, the very idea of Noahide laws shows a remarkable tendency toward recognizing the validity of cultures other than one's own and of affirming the common bond of all civilized peoples. The Noahide laws, which perhaps are lurking in some form in the background to Acts 15, had a profound influence on the development of the concepts of international law and natural law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

2. *T. Avodah Zarah* 8.4; *b. Sanhedrin* 56a–b.

Rabbinic Religion

For some Jews, the destruction of the temple posed a theological crisis no less severe than that which had been felt in the wake of the destruction of the First Temple in 587 BCE and the profanation of the Second in the 160s BCE. Why did God abandon the Jews and allow the enemy to triumph? Why does the world appear to be dominated by evil? Is God still loyal to his people? These questions are addressed by *Fourth Ezra* and the *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*, both written shortly after 70 CE. (A very different sort of response was written by Josephus in his *Jewish War*.) In contrast, the Mishnah and, generally, the rabbis of the second century seem thoroughly unconcerned with these questions. They certainly did react to the absence of the temple, but the sense of crisis and urgency that pervades *Fourth Ezra* and the *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch* is absent. And when the rabbis did turn to these questions in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, they did not write apocalypses, engage in detailed eschatological speculations, or attribute the dominion of this world to the forces of Satan. Instead, they told stories about the horrors of the wars and marveled, in the manner of the psalmist, at God's forbearance.

Why was the rabbinic response so moderate, so restrained? Why so little so late? Apparently because the piety of Second Temple Judaism had prepared the rabbis for a templeless world. If the ancestors of the rabbis were the Pharisees, and if the Pharisees were a sect, then the rabbis certainly would have been prepared to live without a temple, because even when the temple was standing, sects had a very ambivalent attitude toward it. But the sects were merely the extreme representatives of the democratization of Judaism, which affected sectarians and nonsectarians alike. The regimen of daily prayer, Torah study, participation in synagogue services, and observance of the commandments sanctified life outside the temple and, in effect, competed with the temple cult, just as the new lay scholar class, the scribes, and others in effect competed with the priests. After the destruction of the temple, which must have been felt keenly in all reaches of the population, what could have been more natural than to take the extratemple piety that had developed in the preceding centuries and view it as the equivalent or replacement for the temple cult? This perspective is advanced explicitly in the two Talmudim and various other works. For example, a Tannaitic commentary on Deuteronomy remarks that the phrase "love God and serve him" includes Torah study and prayer as well as the sacrificial cult.[3]

The response of the Mishnah is much more subtle. More than half of the Mishnah is devoted to one aspect or another of the temple and its cult, either

3. *Sifre Deuteronomy* §41, pp. 87–88 in the edition of Louis Finkelstein.

because the Mishnah is confidently awaiting the time of their restoration, or because the temple cult had been ordained by God and the study of its regulations was now the equivalent of their implementation, or because the rabbis were attempting to create in their minds an ideal and perfect world to which they could escape from the imperfect world around them (cf. the apocalypses, which in a quite different way are doing the same thing). What the Mishnah is saying by its very existence is that God can be found through the study of his laws, even the laws that cannot be observed in daily life. The Mishnah has very little to say about prayer and almost nothing to say about synagogues because initially the rabbis believed that Torah study was more important than prayer. Only later, when they began to extend their power into the synagogues, did they see prayer as an equally important means of communing with God.

There is much scholarly debate and little certainty about the origins and intent of the Mishnah's laws. All scholars, I think, would agree that some of the laws derive from Second Temple times while others are the innovations of the rabbis of the second century CE; that some of the laws are of "sectarian" provenance or are quintessentially rabbinic while others are part of the Judaism of all Jews; that some of the laws were meant to be applied in daily practice in contemporary society, either by the masses or by the rabbinic elite, while others were entirely speculative and utopian. It is not an easy task to figure out which law belongs in which category. Aside from the laws that are attributed to the houses of Hillel and Shammai, which are concerned for the most part with purity, Sabbath and festivals, and meals (see chap. 5), few laws are attributed to figures of Second Temple times. As a result, to reconstruct the history and social setting of the Mishnah's laws, scholars need to rely on whatever clues the Mishnah itself provides (as I have done in my discussion of the Shema), or on parallels from other Jewish sources (e.g., *Jubilees*, the *Temple Scroll*, Philo), or on parallels from other cultures (e.g., the ancient law codes of the Semitic East, which illuminate much of the Mishnah's civil legislation), or on conjectural analysis of the logic and intent of the laws. Needless to say, there is much scholarly disagreement on both method and conclusions, and I shall not even try to treat these questions here.[4]

I turn now from law to theology. As I discussed in chapter 3, Judaism is not a creedal religion. Not a single tractate of the Mishnah is devoted to a theological topic. We may be sure that the rabbis of the second century believed in a world to come, resurrection of the dead, messianic deliverance, corporate

4. Shaye J. D. Cohen, "The Judaean Legal Tradition and the Halakhah of the Mishnah," in *Cambridge Companion to Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Charlotte E. Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 121–43.

and individual reward and punishment, the efficacy of repentance, and an eternal covenant between God and Israel; but except for one chapter and an occasional paragraph, the Mishnah is not interested in these topics. The Talmudim show a markedly greater interest in theology, but no rabbinic work sets forth the dogmas or essential beliefs of Judaism. The lone chapter of the Mishnah that treats theological topics begins as follows:[5]

> All Israel have a share in the world to come. . . . But these have no share in the world to come: he who says that there is no resurrection of the dead [or: he who says that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead cannot be derived from the Torah]; [he who says that] Torah is not from heaven; and the Epicurean.

This Mishnah refers to three core doctrines of rabbinic Judaism: resurrection of the dead, the divine origin of the (written and the oral) Torah, and divine supervision of human affairs (which the Epicureans deny). But the Mishnah does not elevate these beliefs to the status of dogmas; it does not compose any creeds that would demonstrate how essential these beliefs are to the self-definition of Judaism. Nor does this Mishnah attempt to be complete; it omits, for example, the belief in the messiah (an omission that was sensed by the Talmudim). Those who deny these rabbinic doctrines are not excluded from synagogues or cursed but are excluded from the world to come. This is a punishment that is administered by God, not humans. Denial of these beliefs carries no social penalty.

One of the major distinctions between the theology of the rabbis and the theology of the Second Temple period is the rabbis' complete lack of interest in either apocalyptic literature or eschatological speculations. Instead of writing apocalypses, the rabbis who saw visions and heard heavenly voices wrote mystical works that described journeys to the seventh heaven in order to see God sitting on his throne and hear the angels singing "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts." These works, known as *hekhalot* (the "chambers" of the heavenly palace) or *merkavah* (the "throne" or "chariot" of God) literature, have much in common with the *Angelic Liturgy* (*Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*) of Qumran and the apocalypses but also differ markedly from them. The Qumran *Angelic Liturgy* was recited by the Jews of the Qumran community, since the goal of the sectarians was to join their prayers to those of their heavenly counterparts, but the rabbinic mystical literature did not, as far as is known, have either a communal setting or a liturgical function. Some apocalypses (notably *1 Enoch* 14) contain descriptions of the seer's ascension to heaven and

5. *M. Sanhedrin* 10:1. The phrase "all Israel have a share in the world to come" is missing from the manuscripts but appears in the printed editions

tour of its wonders. These descriptions closely resemble the rabbinic *hekhalot* literature. But as a rule, in the apocalypses the direction of movement is from heaven to earth: the heavenly forces descend to earth and involve themselves in the affairs of humanity. An angel reveals heavenly secrets to a visionary; history comes to an end when God creates the world anew, fights a cosmic battle against the forces of evil, or causes the heavenly Jerusalem to descend to earth. In the rabbinic mystical literature, however, the direction of movement is exclusively from earth to heaven; the mystic ascends to the seventh heaven and enjoys his proximity to God. How many rabbis in Israel and Babylonia sought to commune with God in this fashion, and how they relate to the rabbis who produced the Mishnah and related works, are questions that still have not been answered.

Society and Institutions

In 70 CE, the temple was destroyed, the high priesthood and the Sanhedrin ceased to exist, and the priests lost not only their jobs but also the institutional base of their power. The Jewish community of the land of Israel no longer had a recognized social elite or "establishment," and the Jews of the Diaspora no longer had a center that bound them together. This was the vacuum the rabbis tried to fill. Ultimately they succeeded, but victory was gained only after a struggle. The rabbis were opposed by various segments among the wealthy and the priesthood and by the bulk of the masses in both Israel and the Diaspora. The local aristocracies, especially in the cities, were not going to subject themselves voluntarily to the hegemony of a new power group; the priests still thought of themselves as the leaders of the people; and the masses were indifferent to many aspects of rabbinic piety. The rabbis triumphed over their opponents among the aristocracy and the priesthood by absorbing them into their midst, or at least coming to terms with them. The rabbis triumphed over the indifference of the masses by gradually gaining control of the schools and the synagogues. The exact date of the triumph is hard to determine, but it was not earlier than the seventh century CE.

The central political office in the Jewry of the land of Israel after the destruction was the *nasi* (Hebrew) or *patriarch* (Greek and Latin). The powers claimed and exercised by the patriarch rose substantially from the second century, when the office first appears, to the end of the fourth century. At the beginning of the second century, the patriarch was the head of the central rabbinic academy (in contrast with other rabbis, who led disciple circles); the chair of the rabbinic Sanhedrin (an assembly of rabbis that intended to replace the Sanhedrin of the Second Temple, which had been chaired by the high priest); and the officer in charge of regulating the calendar (a function

formerly exercised by the priests of the temple). By the end of the second century, the patriarch was recognized by the Roman government as the de facto, if not de jure, leader of the Jews of the land of Israel; was collecting taxes from the Jews of the land of Israel for the support of his administration; was appointing judges to the internal court system of the Jewish community; and as befitted a man of his importance, was claiming descent from King David. In the third century CE, the patriarch was appointing school instructors and communal functionaries in some of the Jewish communities of Syria and the land of Israel, and he was described by the church father Origen as a veritable "king of the Jews."[6] In the course of the fourth century, the patriarch was authorized by the Christian Roman emperors to claim jurisdiction over all the Jews of the empire, including their synagogues and synagogue officials; was granted senatorial rank by the emperors; and collected taxes not only from the Jews of the land of Israel but from all the Jews of the empire. In approximately 425 CE, everything came crashing down when, in unclear circumstances, the office was abolished.

The patriarchate began as a rabbinic office. Its most enduring product is the first rabbinic document, the Mishnah, which was edited in about 200 CE by Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, often called simply "Rabbi." However, as the office expanded its power and prestige, it became less rabbinic. The goals of the patriarch were no longer identical with those of the rabbis. Most of the rabbis of the second century, if we may trust the evidence of the Mishnah and related corpora, were well-to-do landowners who lived in villages and small towns. The civil legislation of the Mishnah (and some of its religious legislation as well) treats questions that interested this economic class. In the third century, however, the rabbinic estate came to include the poor, who depended on charity or public employment for their survival, and became increasingly urban, with centers in Caesarea, Tiberias, and Sepphoris. In other words, the patriarchate was becoming the leader not just for the rabbis but also for the Jewry of the land of Israel as a whole, and the office of rabbi was becoming a profession as much as the affectation of a social elite. This transition was largely the work of Judah the Patriarch and his immediate successors. The urban elites who originally opposed rabbinic hegemony were gradually brought into the patriarchal government. Many rabbis resisted these changes, and the two Talmudim preserve many stories of great tension between the rabbis and the patriarch in the third century. But these changes were essential to the ultimate triumph of rabbinic Judaism, because they broadened the rabbis' reach and placed them at the center of communal life.

6. Origen, *Epistle to Africanus on the Story of Susanna*, in J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 11.81, 84.

It took much longer for the rabbis to establish control over synagogues. As I explained in chapter 3, synagogues were neither a rabbinic invention nor a uniquely rabbinic institution. In the fourth century the patriarch was granted jurisdiction over synagogue officials throughout the Roman Empire, but it is unclear to what extent he actually exercised this authority and to what extent he would have been interested in promoting the interests of the rabbis abroad. In any case, the Mishnah and the two Talmudim have little legislation concerning the synagogue, and few narratives imply that the rabbis were authority figures in the synagogue. The synagogue was the home of popular piety, and as a result many rabbis in both the second century and later recommended prayer in the *bet midrash*, the safe confines of the rabbinic school, rather than the synagogue. Some said outright that study was more important than prayer.[7]

Archaeologists have discovered the remains of dozens of synagogues of the late third to seventh centuries throughout the land of Israel. These synagogues were built in a wide variety of styles, sizes, and shapes. Many of them were decorated with mosaics or carvings of geometric patterns, animals, fruits, birds, zodiacs, Jewish cult objects (like the menorah), or biblical scenes. Most striking are the synagogues, predominantly in Galilee in the fourth to sixth centuries, that centered on the floor of the main hall have a mosaic of the twelve signs of the zodiac revolving around the sun chariot. The Diaspora has provided one remarkable example of a decorated synagogue; this is the third-century synagogue of Dura-Europos, on the Euphrates (in modern-day Syria), whose four walls were covered with paintings of biblical scenes. Before these discoveries were made, it was widely believed that the second of the Ten Commandments, the prohibition of graven images, effectively precluded the existence of "Jewish art." After the discoveries were made, scholars restudied the rabbinic interpretation of the prohibition and concluded that at least some rabbis would not have objected to these synagogue decorations. But even if some rabbis in antiquity would have tolerated this art, would they have wanted it in the first place? If the synagogues had been bastions of rabbinic Judaism, would they have been decorated in this fashion? The answer to this question is still being debated as more archaeological evidence is being assembled, but the answer seems to be no.

Furthermore, many of the synagogues contain inscriptions that record donations or name the officers of the congregation. Rabbis seldom figure in these inscriptions, and when they do, they invariably are donors, not officers. Therefore, it is most unlikely that the rabbis were in control of the synagogues of the land of Israel in the second to sixth centuries. Some synagogues

7. *B. Shabbat* 10a; *Berakhot* 64a; *Menahot* 110a.

undoubtedly were under their sway—one seventh-century synagogue from the Beisan valley (south of the Sea of Galilee) featured a central mosaic containing an excerpt from the Yerushalmi concerning tithes—but many, if not most, were not led by rabbis. And if this was true of the land of Israel in the sixth century, it most certainly was true of the land of Israel in the second century and the Diaspora throughout antiquity. Rabbinic domination of the synagogue was the result of a long and gradual process.

The End of Sectarianism

In the first century CE, Judaism was marked by numerous sects and groups: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, the Jews of Qumran, Zealots, Sicarii, "the Fourth Philosophy," Christians, Samaritans, Therapeutae, and others. Judaism after 70 CE, in contrast, was not marked by sectarianism. Samaritans persisted as a marginal group in Jewish society (even if they were numerous and active in their own right); Christians became predominantly gentile and ultimately a separate religion; but all the other groups virtually disappeared from the historical record, except for occasional rabbinic and patristic references to the Second Temple period. In their stead, the rabbis emerged as virtually the only group about which any information is extant. How can these facts be explained? There are two basic possibilities: either the shift in the nature of the available evidence gives the erroneous impression that sectarianism ceased, or the cessation of sectarianism was somehow caused by the war of 66–70 and the destruction of the temple. Scholars agree that the latter is far more likely than the former, but the subject is complex, and both possibilities require discussion.

The Nature of the Available Documentation

Our knowledge of the history of Judaism in the post-70 period derives almost exclusively from rabbinic texts. Pagan, Christian, and archaeological sources contribute isolated details but nothing more. The expression "rabbinic period" reflects the fact that we are well informed about the rabbis and about no one else. One of the remarkable characteristics of the Mishnah is how little information the text reveals about itself, its origins, authors, history, sources, and social setting. The two Talmudim and the rest of rabbinic literature are more forthcoming with such information (whether the information is reliable is another matter entirely), but at no point do the rabbis feel constrained to identify their opponents precisely or to describe competing groups in Jewish society. The rabbis often refer to gentiles, heretics, and irreligious or nonobservant Jews, but they had no interest in describing the manifold varieties of each of these categories. Rabbinic literature is an "internal" literature, written by, about, and for the rabbis.

Perhaps, then, we could argue that sects and groups did continue a vigorous existence after 70 CE and that it is an accident of literary history that we are poorly informed about this fact. Aside from the Qumran scrolls, most of the documentation illustrating the varieties of Judaism in the Second Temple period (Josephus, Philo, apocalypses, pseudepigraphic literature of whatever genre, etc.) was preserved by Christians, but the increasing distance between Judaism and Christianity at the beginning of the second century meant that very few Jewish works written after 100 CE were incorporated in the literary heritage of the new religion. The fact that so little Jewish nonrabbinic literature exists from the rabbinic period proves that neither the rabbis nor the Christians desired to preserve this material; it does not necessarily prove that such literature never existed. Perhaps the demise of sectarianism really took place long after 70 CE, and some future discovery, like that of the Dead Sea Scrolls, will prove how variegated Judaism was even after the destruction of the Second Temple.

What future discoveries may bring is, of course, unknown. No one could have predicted the treasures revealed at Qumran, and no one can predict what discoveries await the historian of the rabbinic period. But the evidence now available is consistent. Except for Samaritans and Jewish Christians, sects disappeared after 70 CE. Many Jews, perhaps most Jews, did not yet regard the rabbis as their leaders and did not regard rabbinic Judaism as the standard of behavior and belief. The rabbis themselves refer to *ʿamme haʾaretz*, literally, "peoples of the land," Jews who observe the Sabbath and various other commandments but who slight or ignore the rules of purity and tithing or who simply do not affect a rabbinic way of life.[8] These are the Jews, we may presume, who built and frequented those synagogues in which the rabbis did not feel at home. The church fathers refer to Jews who deny the resurrection of the dead, pray to angels, and do various other things of which the rabbis would have disapproved.[9] And outside the rabbinic pale altogether were the Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora, who had minimal contacts with the rabbis of the land of Israel and were well established in their own communities with their own religious traditions.

The absence of sectarianism, therefore, does not mean the absence of diversity. But no source claims that this diversity consisted of sects or even hints that sects and other organized groups continued to exist. One Christian writer of the third century remarks that after the destruction of the temple and the rejection of the Jews by God, Satan no longer bothers to tempt the

8. See esp. *B. Berakhot* 47b and *Pesahim* 49a–b.

9. See, e.g., Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.26 and 5.14, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 26, 274.

Jews to sin. Instead, Satan directs his attentions to the Christians. Therefore, Christianity is beset with heresy and discord while Judaism is not.[10] After 70 CE, Jewish society was not marked by sects.

The Destruction of the Temple and the Disappearance of Sectarianism

During the war of 66–70 CE, the Romans exterminated or at least greatly weakened many of the sects. The revolutionary groups (Zealots, Sicarii, Fourth Philosophy) were destroyed. Groups of Sicarii held out at Masada and other places for a few years, but their numbers were few and their actions (even if spectacular) were inconsequential. The Qumran community was destroyed in 68 CE. Insofar as the Sadducees consisted of temple priests and high priests, their numbers were severely reduced by the military actions of both the Romans and the revolutionaries. Aside from removing various sects, the war also removed the focal point of sectarianism. Sectarianism requires an evil reality against which to rail and protest, something that can serve as the focal point of its separatist energies. The chief focal point of ancient Jewish sectarianism was the temple (see chap. 5), and with its destruction and the humbling of the high priesthood, the sects lost much of their reason for existing. Thus the war prepared the way for a society without sects.

The Pharisees disappeared too, but they transformed themselves into rabbis. As I discussed in chapter 5, the rabbis see themselves not as "Pharisees" but as "the sages of Israel." Neither the Mishnah nor any other rabbinic work betrays a Pharisaic self-consciousness. When the rabbis told stories about the Second Temple period, they were sure that their opponents were Sadducees (and Boethusians, a group mentioned only in rabbinic literature), but they were not as insistent that their ancestors were Pharisees. We might be tempted to conclude that the rabbis really have little connection with the Pharisees, a thesis that has been defended by several scholars in recent years, but there are links between the two groups, most conspicuously the house of Gamaliel. Gamaliel was a distinguished Pharisee of Jerusalem, a member of the Sanhedrin in the time of Paul (Acts 5:34; 22:3). Simon ben Gamaliel, Josephus tells us, was a Pharisee "of an illustrious family" and one of the leaders of the revolutionary coalition in Jerusalem in 66–67 CE. Rabban Gamaliel was the leader of the first generation of rabbinic sages after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE and the founder of the patriarchal house.[11] Rabbi Judah the Patriarch was his grandson. From leader of Pharisees to patriarch of

10. *Didascalia apostolorum* (= *Teaching of the [Twelve] Apostles*) 23, trans. Arthur Vööbus, in Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium 401 (Louvain: CSCO, 1979), 211.

11. Josephus, *Life* 38 §191; *m. Rosh HaShanah* 2.

rabbis—the continued prominence of the house of Gamaliel provides strong evidence for a close connection between the Pharisees of the first century CE and the rabbis of the second.

The rabbis were latter-day Pharisees who had no interest in publicizing the connection, not only because sectarian groups seldom see themselves as sects but also because the rabbis had no desire to exclude anyone. There is no evidence that *all* the members of the new rabbinic movement were Pharisees or the descendants of Pharisees or that the rabbis wished to exclude non-Pharisees. Until recently, scholars argued that the final separation between Jews and Christians was caused by the rabbis of Yavneh (in Greek: Jamnia), the first generation of rabbis after the destruction who assembled at this town west-northwest of Jerusalem. There, according to both Talmudim, the rabbis instituted the "benediction against the heretics" (*Birkat ha-minim*), a prayer to God to destroy "heretics" or "sectarians" and to frustrate their plans.[12] Who were these "heretics"? Scholars argued that the intended victims were the Christians. Since the Christians could not recite this benediction, and presumably would have been uncomfortable in the presence of those who did, the effect of the institution of this benediction was to expel Christians from the synagogues. Scholars found confirmation for this interpretation in John's references to the expulsion of Christians from synagogues (John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2) and in the assertions of various church fathers that the Jews curse Christ and/or Christians in their daily prayers. If this reconstruction is correct, the rabbis were triumphalist Pharisees who eagerly excluded their rivals.

But this reconstruction no longer commands universal assent. Obviously the Christians of John's community were expelled from their local synagogues, or at least believed themselves to have been expelled, but this hardly means that all Jews everywhere expelled Christians. Synagogues were not beholden to any central body; every community ran its synagogue in its own way. Even if the rabbis wished to expel Christians from all the synagogues of the Roman Empire, they lacked the power and the authority to do so. Furthermore, although by the fourth century the "benediction against heretics" was directed against Christians or some Jewish-Christian sects, its original version was a generic denunciation of all heretics. The intent was not to single out Christians or any other specific group but to proclaim the end of sectarianism.

One of the peculiar characteristics of the Mishnah is the prevalence of legal disputes. The very first paragraph of the Mishnah opens with a three-way dispute, and virtually every following page contains legal disputes of one kind or another. This characteristic of the Mishnah is new in two respects. First,

12. *B. Berakhot* 28b; *y. Berakhot* 4.3 8a.

for the most part, Second Temple literature attributes legal disputes to sects, not individuals. Even in rabbinic literature the vast majority of legal disputes ascribed to pre-70 figures involve the houses of Hillel and Shammai, not individuals. After 70 CE, the disputes between the houses, no less than the disputes between sects, cease to be replaced by disputes between individual rabbinic masters. Second, sectarian dispute was the consequence of exclusivity and social division, but rabbinic dispute was not. The rabbis of the Yavnean period, who were able to maintain normal social intercourse among themselves in spite of their legal disputes, imagined that the houses of Hillel and Shammai had been able to do the same.[13]

It is unlikely, therefore, that the rabbis felt a need to exclude anyone from their number; on the contrary, their ultimate success derived from the fact that they were prepared to absorb even the elements that originally opposed them. The real concession that the rabbis demanded of all comers was that they forgo any sectarian affiliation. Legal disputes would be tolerated, even fostered, but sectarian disputes must cease. This was the message of the benediction against heretics. The rabbis prayed that God destroy all those who persisted in maintaining a separatist identity in a world without a temple and in a society that was prepared to tolerate disputes.

If this reconstruction is correct, the institution of the benediction against heretics was an important milestone in the self-definition of rabbinic Judaism but not a crucial moment in the birth of Christianity. The separation of Christianity from Judaism was a process, not an event. The essential part of the process was that the church was becoming more and more gentile and less and less Jewish, but the separation manifested itself in different ways in each community where Jews and Christians dwelled together. In some places, the Jews expelled the Christians; in others, the Christians left of their own accord. The benediction against heretics perhaps shows why the Christians would have felt unwelcome in the rabbinic community of the land of Israel, but it has only minimal relevance to the process as a whole. In chapter 8 I shall return to the separation between Jews and Christians and to the Birkat ha-minim.

Canon and Literature

The canonization of the Tanak is another action that, until recently, was widely credited by scholars to the Yavnean rabbis. According to this view, as part of their program to define "orthodoxy" and expel unwanted elements, the Yavnean rabbis eliminated all the apocalypses (except Daniel) from the

13. *M. Yevamot* 1:4; see chap. 5 above.

canon and ignored, if not suppressed, all the literature written in Greek. This reconstruction has few adherents today, not only because the evidence for this Yavnean program is tenuous, as I have just discussed, but also because the formation of the canon is too complex a process (again, a process, not an event) to be attributed to a single generation of scholars whose authority over the people was dubious. The rabbis debated the canonical status of various books, but for the most part they were not creating a canon so much as they were confronting a canon that was already in existence. The rabbis did, to be sure, ignore apocalypses and Greek Jewish literature, but these facts can be explained in various ways and need not be attributed to anti-Christian animus. Apocalypses in general were esoteric rather than popular works, and if the majority of the framers of the Mishnah were country squires, as I suggested above, their ignorance of Greek literature, both Jewish and pagan, is scarcely surprising.

The rabbis preserved and developed the Targumim and prayers but ignored the histories, apocalypses, testaments, romances, wisdom books, hymns, and biblical paraphrases that had been written in such abundance in Second Temple times. They wrote a series of commentaries on the Torah (and by the end of the rabbinic period, on several other biblical books as well) that far exceed in length and detail anything written before 70 CE. Mystical circles took many motifs and ideas from the apocalypses and developed the *hekhalot* literature (see above). But the most distinctive and most important rabbinic works, namely the Mishnah and the two Talmudim, were written in new genres.

The Mishnah, the first rabbinic book (see above), is not a legal code but a digest of legal material. The Talmudim, however, assume that the Mishnah's main purpose was legislative. They reduce the ambiguity of the Mishnah's legal disputes by determining which of its divergent opinions on any given subject is correct. The Talmudim also clarify the Mishnah's obscurities, reconcile its contradictions, and expand its rulings into areas that the Mishnah did not consider. The Talmudim comment on the Mishnah and treat it as a canonical source of law, but because the Talmudim are so discursive, so elaborate, so prone to expansion, and so ready to follow their own agenda, they are not really "commentaries" at all.

One item on the agenda of both Talmudim is to connect the laws of the Mishnah to the Torah. Only on rare occasions does the Mishnah show how its laws can be derived exegetically from the words of the Torah; even rarer are the occasions when the Mishnah claims that a certain law was received from ancient tradition or was innovated by a specific rabbi at a specific time. The Mishnah does not reveal the origin either of itself as a whole or of its constituent laws. The only passage that does so is the chain of tradition that opens the tractate *Avot*: "Moses received Torah [or: the Torah] from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua, and Joshua [transmitted it] to the elders," and so on. The chain

of masters and disciples ends with the patriarchal house and the sages of the Mishnah. Like Moses, the Mishnaic sages teach and transmit "Torah." What exactly is meant by "Torah" here is not clear. A minimal definition might be "rabbinic authority," so that this text is saying that the Mishnaic sages have the authority of Moses to teach and to issue legal decisions. They sit "on the seat of Moses" (cf. Matt. 23:2) and teach "with authority" (cf. Matt. 7:29). In this conception, Moses will not necessarily have known all the details of Mishnaic law, but his ignorance does not prevent the Mishnaic sages from believing that they were working within a Mosaic framework. Or perhaps "Torah" here should be understood maximally, as the Talmud would later explain: "Any teaching ever to be taught by a disciple before his master was already revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai."[14] In this conception, all of Mishnaic law—indeed, all of rabbinic law as explicated by the talmudic sages of antiquity, and later by the interpreters and legal codifiers of the Middle Ages—was known to Moses. Humans do not have the authority to innovate religious law.

But whether understood minimally or maximally, the notion of "Torah" in the opening paragraph of tractate *Avot* seems to adumbrate the talmudic idea of "the Oral Torah," according to which Moses at Mount Sinai received two Torahs from God: the written Torah, what we call the five books of Moses, the Pentateuch, Genesis through Deuteronomy; and the Oral Torah, which supplemented and explicated the written Torah. According to various passages in the Talmud, the contents of the Mishnah derive from the Oral Torah.[15] Rabbinic Judaism is the Judaism of the Oral Torah.

Just as the Jews gained mastery over the Torah through interpretation, the rabbis of the Talmud gained mastery over the Mishnah through interpretation. They subordinated it to an earlier canonical text of higher authority. In practice, of course, the rabbis of both the Mishnah and the Talmudim were innovators as well as conservators, but whereas the Mishnah admitted this implicitly by not linking its rulings to the words of the Torah, the Talmudim felt constrained to deny it. The tension between these rival perspectives continued in medieval Judaism; and in the ongoing debates between fundamentalist and liberal Judaism, it continues to this day.

CONCLUSION

From the Maccabees to the Mishnah is a span of about 350 years. During this period, Judaism gradually assumed the shape that it would maintain until the

14. *Y. Pe'ah* 2.6 17a and parallels.
15. Classic text: *B. Gittin* 60a–b.

rise of modernity. It became a "book" religion, which sought God not only through prayer and liturgy but also through the study of, and total immersion in, the written word of God. Study was for its own sake as well as for the sake of learning the requirements of the religion. In the Torah, Moses detailed the rules and regulations that the Israelites had to obey if they were to remain loyal to the covenant. The rabbis, following the precedent that had been established in Second Temple times, took the scriptural regulations and expanded them, added to them, and changed them. They accepted many of the theological, legal, and institutional innovations of the Second Temple period. But like their ancestors and their descendants, the rabbis saw themselves not as the creators of something new but as the bearers of something old. They were Israel, heirs to the eternal promise that God had sworn to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

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8

Ways That Parted

Jews, Christians, Jewish Christians (ca. 100–150)

Jesus was a Jew, born in Galilee. Like most of the other inhabitants of the Roman province of Judea, he worshiped the God whose temple was in Jerusalem. Not only was Jesus a Jew, but so were all of his disciples ("apostles"), all those who gathered to see his miracles or hear his words ("crowds"), and almost all those who benefited from his miraculous cures. As "king of the Jews" (perhaps "king of the Judeans" would be better) he was sentenced to death by the Romans. After his death his followers, all of whom were Jews like Jesus himself, constituted a Jewish movement, perhaps a sect, meeting and praying regularly in the temple of Jerusalem and interacting with other Jewish worshipers. (At least this is the story in the opening chapters of Acts; see chapter 4 above.) And yet before long the Jesus movement was no longer Jewish; it became something different, a social phenomenon of its own. This division, usually called "the parting of the ways," is the subject of this chapter. Jewish sectarianism in the first century CE is discussed above, in chapter 5.

Here I briefly state the methodological foundations on which this chapter rests. Some of these foundations are contested by scholars, as indicated in the footnotes. The parting of the ways is a complicated and much debated subject.

- The parting of the ways is about people, societies, and institutions, not about disembodied truth claims or the abstractions "Judaism" and "Christianity."[1]

1. Thus in this essay I speak about the parting of the ways between Jews and Christians, not between "Judaism" and "Christianity," because for a historian "Judaism" and "Christianity" have no meaning except as convenient labels for the beliefs, practices, institutions, etc., of Jews and Christians, respectively. (See chapter 3 above for a discussion of this point.) If instead one speaks about "Judaism" and "Christianity" as a collection of theological abstractions, one might conclude that they were, and perhaps

- No doubt arguments between Jews and Christians—about theological topics such as the oneness of God, the place of angels and other intermediaries in the cosmic order, the nature of the messiah, and the like—contributed to the social separation of the two groups, but the conflicting views in and of themselves did not necessarily cause that social separation. Such a causal link needs to be demonstrated, not merely asserted.[2]
- The parting of the ways involves people whom we call "Jews" and "Christians," even if our ancient sources do not always use these labels. Rabbinic texts, for example, never use the term "Judaism" and never[3] refer to the collectivity of Israel as "Jews." Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* never uses the term "Christianity." Nevertheless, for the sake of convenience and clarity, I shall continue to use these terms.
- The notion of "the parting of the ways" does not in the least suggest that Jews and Christians stopped speaking with each other, arguing with each other, and influencing each other. Christian literature of the first centuries CE bears many signs of reaction to Jewish truth claims, and if we believe modern scholarship, Jewish (rabbinic) literature of the first centuries CE bears many signs of reaction to Christian truth claims, but such reactions in and of themselves neither prove nor disprove a parting of the ways. They prove only that Jews and Christians continued to speak with each other.[4]
- There was no parting of the ways between gentile Christians and non-Christian Jews for the simple reason that their ways had never been

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still are, one and the same, an approach and a conclusion that I reject. This is (one of) my objection(s) to Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

2. Thus I take issue with the conclusion of the symposium convened by James D. G. Dunn, ed., *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1992; repr., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999). Dunn writes on 368, "The Symposium remained divided regarding Christology, not on the fact that Christian claims regarding Jesus were the crucial factor in 'the parting of the ways,' but on how and when these Christological claims made the breach inevitable." This is to assume what needs to be demonstrated: Were Christian claims regarding Jesus the crucial factor in the parting of the ways? Christian texts, beginning with the Gospel of John, would have us think so, but this fact hardly settles the matter.

3. M. Nedarim 11:12 refers to the collectivity of Jewish men as "Jews," an exceptional usage.

4. Thus I take issue with the viewpoint of the editors of the anthology *The Ways that Never Parted*, ed. Adam Becker and Annette Y. Reed (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003; repr., Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), who seem to think that discussion between Jews and Christians in antiquity is evidence against a parting of the ways and that the "old model" of the parting of the ways (e.g., the view of James Parkes) did not allow for ongoing contacts between Jews and Christians. Parkes was well aware of ongoing contacts between Jews and Christians, but these contacts did not for Parkes (or for me) call into question the reality of the parting of the ways. For ongoing interchange between Jews and Christians, see James Parkes, *Conflict of the Church and Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism* (London: Soncino Press, 1934; repr., New York: World Publishing Co.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1961), 113–19.

united. Even the most hellenized of Jews, such as Philo of Alexandria, belonged to Jewish communities that were socially distinct from "the Greeks," no matter how well these Jews spoke Greek, knew Greek literature, and assimilated Greek culture high and low. "God-fearing" gentiles may have associated themselves in some way with synagogues and other Jewish communal institutions, but unless they became proselytes ("converts"), they were not members. A non-Christian Jewish community that admitted Jews and non-Jews alike, without prejudice and (in the case of males) without circumcision, is nowhere attested in antiquity.[5] So, for gentiles who believed in Christ and for Jews who did not, there was no need for a parting of the ways, even if there was a need on occasion for polemic, apologetic, and recrimination. As we shall see, both the Romans and the gentile Christians of the early second century CE, if not earlier, knew that the social space of Christians was separate from that of Jews.

- Jewish believers in Christ had a choice: they could join the emerging Christian communities that were being populated more and more by gentile Christians; or they could try to maintain their place within Jewish society, a stance that would become harder and harder to maintain as the decades went by; or if they were uncomfortable among non-Jewish Christians and non-Christian Jews, they could try to maintain their own communities, separate from each of the others. In various passages the New Testament shows that in the first century CE the first of these possibilities was the norm; Jewish Christians and gentile Christians were alike members of the newly created Christian communities. But as these communities became more and more gentile, and more and more hostile to non-Christian Jews (see below), their ethnically Jewish members had to decide if they were prepared to remain, at the cost of their Jewish identity; or if they preferred to maintain their position within the Jewish community; or if that were now impossible, to occupy a separate and interstitial space between gentile Christians and non-Christian Jews. Here, then, was a real parting of the ways, as Jewish Christians had to negotiate their way between Jewish and Christian communities. Unfortunately many aspects of this story are hidden from us; the attested facts are few and far between, and the scholarly conjectures are many.[6] I shall discuss (below) the earliest rabbinic evidence on the relations between the rabbinic Jewish community and Jewish believers in Jesus.
- The parting of the ways between Jews and Christians also involves a third party, the Romans, with whom I begin my survey of the evidence.

5. On "God-fearers," the social separation between Jews and gentiles, and the place of circumcision in communal Jewish identity, see chapter 1 above. Further details in Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), esp. 152n41.

6. The best place to begin is *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007).

ROMAN EVIDENCE

By the early second century CE and consistently thereafter, the Romans regarded Christians as not-Jews and Jews as not-Christians. This is seen most clearly in the persecutions. On and off throughout the second and third centuries CE, the Romans persecuted Christians. Many Christians were arrested and tried; some were released after negotiating an arrangement with the prosecutor, but others were condemned and martyred. For the most part these were local persecutions, affecting the Christians of specific times and places; the persecutions under the emperor Decius in the middle of the third century and under Diocletian at the beginning of the fourth century were the only sustained empire-wide assaults on Christianity mounted by the Romans. The story of Christian martyrs has been told many times.[7] What is important for our purposes is the fact that the persecutions did not affect the Jews. Christians were arrested, not Jews. Christians were tried, not Jews. Christians were martyred, not Jews. In fact, by the middle of the second century CE, Christian writers regularly accuse the Jews of assisting, or even goading, the Romans in their persecuting activities.[8] At least one case is attested of a Christian converting to Judaism in order to escape persecution.[9] In other words, in the eyes of the Romans, Christians were not Jews, and Jews were not Christians. The two communities were separate.

This is also confirmed by the opposite case: when the Roman Empire persecuted Jews, it ignored Christians. Simeon bar Kokhba (bar Kosba or bar Koziva) led a rebellion against the Romans in Judea in 132–135 CE; as either cause of the rebellion or response to it, the Romans launched a persecution against Jewish observances (see chap. 1 above). There is substantial scholarly debate about this persecution, some maximizing and others minimizing its course and extent.[10] In any case, whatever the details may be, in connection with this war rabbinic literature records the martyrdom of a number of

7. See, e.g., W. H. C. Frend, "Persecutions: Genesis and Legacy," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 1, *Origins to Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 503–23. See also Candida R. Moss, *Ancient Christian Martyrdom: Diverse Practices, Theologies, and Traditions*, Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012).

8. The earliest appearance of this motif is the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 12.2; 13.1; 17.2; 18.1, in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, ed. Michael Holmes, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007; repr., 2009). Polycarp was martyred about 160 CE, and the text of the martyrdom was written shortly after the event.

9. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.12.1 (during the reign of Septimus Severus).

10. Peter Schäfer, ed., *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

distinguished sages, the most famous being Rabbi Aqiva. Christian texts accuse Bar Kokhba of persecuting the (Jewish) Christians of Judea; since Bar Kokhba had messianic pretensions, he could not abide the messianic claims of another.[11] In any event, the Romans paid no attention to the Christians in this war. In the eyes of the Romans, Jews and Christians constituted separate communities.[12]

In a recent book, Marius Heemstra argues that the Roman administration of the *fiscus Judaicus* played an important role in the parting of the ways.[13] The *fiscus Judaicus* was a tax imposed on the Jews of the Roman Empire by the Emperor Vespasian in the early 70s CE. Whereas formerly all (male) Jews had sent a half shekel (two drachmas) annually to the temple of Jerusalem, now, after the destruction of that temple, all Jews (including, apparently, women) were required to send that same amount to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome, which had been badly damaged by fire and was in need of repair and restoration. Vespasian did not concern himself about which Jews exactly would be liable for the new tax. His son Domitian (r. 81–96 CE), however, administered the tax "harshly," trying to impose it upon two classes of individuals who had escaped the tax up to that point: those who lived a Jewish life without publicly acknowledging the fact and those who concealed their Jewish origins. These two groups, says Suetonius, the famous biographer of the emperors and our main source, were now expected to pay the Jewish tax.[14] There has been much scholarly debate about the interpretation of these two categories. Heemstra argues that the first category includes gentile Christians (who lived a Jewish life without publicly acknowledging the fact) and the second includes Jewish Christians (ethnic Jews who concealed their Jewish origins). In other words, under Domitian the Romans regarded both gentile Christianity and Jewish Christianity as forms of Judaism; hence both gentile Christians and Jewish Christians were liable to the tax.

11. Justin, *1 Apology* 31.6; Eusebius, *Chronographia* ad annum Abrahami 2149; Orosius 7.13.4. These texts are conveniently available in Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, rev. and ed. Géza Vermès et al. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973), 1:545n141. The Bar-Kokhba documents from the Judean desert do not mention Christians (at least not explicitly).

12. Intellectuals of the second and third centuries CE also knew how to distinguish Judaism from Christianity: see the excerpts from Galen, Celsus, and Porphyry in Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, vol. 2, *From Tacitus to Simplicius* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences, 1980).

13. Marius Heemstra, *The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways* (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2010). See my review in *Biblical Archaeology Review* 38, no. 6 (November/December 2012): 66–68.

14. Suetonius, *Life of Domitian* 12.1–2 = Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, vol. 2, no. 320.

Domitian's exactions were unpopular in Rome. In 96 CE his successor Nerva immediately set about reforming the administration of the *fiscus Judaicus*, even issuing a coin celebrating this reform. The essential part of the reform was to redefine Judaism as a religion; in the words of a Roman historian of the early third century CE, only those "Jews who continued to observe their ancestral customs" would be liable to the tax. Christianity was now seen by the Romans as not-Judaism; the *fiscus Judaicus* applied to neither gentile Christians nor Jewish Christians. One consequence of this fateful step is that Christians lost the legal protections that Jews had enjoyed for decades under Roman rule.

There are many uncertainties and debatable points in this reconstruction; at least it confirms the basic point that by the early second century CE, Christianity—even Jewish Christianity—became in Roman eyes a new thing separate from Judaism. Whether Roman perception in turn affected Jewish and/or Christian self-definition, or whether Jewish and/or Christian self-definition helped shape the Roman perception—these possibilities still require scholarly investigation.

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE

Christian literature from approximately 100 CE to 160 is uniformly hostile to Jews and Judaism.[15] Here is a brief survey of the main references.[16] The *Didache* (ca. 100 CE) contains much material of Jewish origin, but the only time the author alludes to Jews is the passage in which he calls them "hypocrites" and encourages his audience, "Do not let your fasts coincide with those of the hypocrites. They fast on Monday and Thursday, so you must fast on Wednesday and Friday" (*Did.* 8.1). Ignatius writes (ca. 110–120 CE), "If we continue to live in accordance with Judaism, we admit that we have not received grace" (*To the Magnesians* 8.1); "It is absurd to profess Jesus Christ and to judaize" (*Magn.* 10.3); and "If anyone expounds Judaism to you, do not listen to him" (*To the Philadelphians* 6.1). For Ignatius, "Christianity" (a term that appears here for the first time) contrasts with "Judaism" (*Magn.*

15. The standard survey is Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1982).

16. For the dating and attribution of early Christian texts, I follow Siegmar Döpp and Wilhelm Geerlings, eds., *Dictionary of Early Christian Literature* (New York: Crossroad, 2000). The works of the Apostolic Fathers are cited from Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*.

10.3; *Phld.* 6.1).[17] The *Epistle of Barnabas* (ca. 130 CE) argues that Christians properly understand the Hebrew Scriptures, especially the laws of the Torah, while "they" do not (2.7; 3.6; 8.7; 10.12). "They" are the Jews, also called "the former people," in contrast to Christians, who are "this people" (13.1); "they" received the covenant but were not worthy, therefore "we" have received it (14.1, 4–5). The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (ca. 160) posits that Jews aid the Romans in persecuting Christians.[18] According to the *Epistle to Diognetus* (ca. 190? perhaps earlier), "Christians are right to keep their distance from the common silliness and deception and fussiness and pride of the Jews" (4.6); the Jews fault the Christians as "gentiles" (5.17, lit., "of a different stock").

The two main anti-Jewish texts of the second century are the *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, by Justin Martyr (ca. 160 CE, set in Ephesus, perhaps written in Rome); and the *On the Pascha*, by Melito of Sardis (ca. 170 CE). These works are too long and too rich to be discussed here in any detail so I merely touch upon the highlights. The main argument of the *Dialogue with Trypho* is that the Bible (Justin is referring to the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, as there is no New Testament yet) belongs to Christians, not Jews, because Christians read it and understand it, while Jews read it and do not understand it. Barnabas made the same point, but Justin is much longer and much more detailed. The argument is developed around three themes: Christ is the new law, replacing the old law of the Jews, which need not be observed by non-Jews; Christ is the promised Messiah, fulfilling the biblical prophecies; Christians are the new Israel, taking the place of the Jews, the old Israel.[19]

Melito's *On the Pascha* is a different sort of work entirely. Probably a sermon delivered to a Christian congregation in the Paschal (Easter) season, it develops the idea (first attested in Paul and the Gospel of John) that Christ is the paschal lamb. By happy coincidence the Greek word *pascha*, "suffering," sounds like *Pesakh*, the Hebrew word for Passover. Christ is the slaughtered lamb who suffers, whose death brings about forgiveness and salvation for his people. For Melito, Christ the slaughtered paschal lamb is also God and Lord. Melito draws the logical conclusion: the Jews (whom Melito calls "Israel") have murdered God, with the result that Israel itself now "lies dead," rejected by God. Melito has been called "the poet of deicide," since his is the earliest work to develop this

17. The term also appears in Ignatius, *To the Magnesians* 10.1; idem, *To the Romans* 3.3. See my "Judaism without Circumcision and 'Judaism' without 'Circumcision' in Ignatius," *Harvard Theological Review* 95 (2002): 395–415, reprinted in my *The Significance of Yavneh and Other Essays in Jewish Hellenism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

18. See note 7 above.

19. A convenient and accessible translation is *St. Justin Martyr Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. Thomas B. Falls, rev. Thomas Halton, ed. Michael Slusser (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003).

theme.[20] Melito was probably a Quartodeciman, a Christian who celebrates Easter (Pascha) on the fourteenth of the first lunar month of spring, precisely when the Jews begin their celebration of Passover (Pesach). For other Christians, Easter is celebrated on Sunday, marking Christ's resurrection; for the Quartodecimans, the Pascha is celebrated on whatever day of the week is the fourteenth of the month, marking Christ's redemptive suffering on the cross. Even though, or perhaps because, the practice of the Quartodecimans is close to Jewish usage, they were hardly close to Jews or Judaism, as Melito's invective shows.

Scholars have long debated whether the anti-Judaism of these texts is the result of social competition between Jews and Christians, each side eagerly trying to win over converts, or whether it is a function of internal Christian self-definition, as the Christians of the second century CE tried to sort out exactly what Christianity is and what Christianity is not. Thus, for example, the intended audience of Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* has been much discussed. At first glance the book appears to be directed to a Jewish audience, as Justin tries to win over Trypho the Jew, and with him all Jewish readers. But the text also contains many signs that its primary function is to establish the proper limits of Christianity, to teach its readers how Christianity differs from Judaism. And some scholars have argued that Justin's target audience consists of Greeks who are thinking about converting to Judaism and becoming "proselytes." Justin is trying hard to convince them that Christianity, not Judaism, is the true fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures and that they should therefore convert to Christianity, not Judaism.[21]

In any case, no matter how this question is answered, the anti-Jewish stance of virtually all early Christian texts shows that these authors understand Christianity to be not-Judaism. These authors assume that Jews and Christians inhabit separate communities. The texts regularly assert that Christians constitute a new people beside pagans ("Greeks") and Jews, a people that is both old and new: old since it fulfills the prophecies of Scripture and new since it replaces the old Israel.[22] There is no evidence in any of these texts—or

20. Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha*, trans. Alistair Stewart-Sykes (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007), stanzas 90–99. See the chapter on Melito in Jeremy Cohen, *Christ Killers: The Jews and the Passion from the Bible to the Big Screen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). According to Melito, the Romans play no role in Christ's death.

21. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 23.3; 80.1; 122–23 (proselytes); cf. *Epistle of Barnabas* 3.6. See Miroslav Marcovich, ed., *Iustini Martyris Dialogus cum Tryphone* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), 64–65. On the larger question, see, e.g., Judith Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996); and Miriam S. Taylor, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995).

22. See the numerous passages assembled by Adolf von Harnack, *Die Mission und*

anywhere else in antiquity, for that matter—for the existence of a community, whether Jewish or Christian, that included on equal terms gentile believers in Christ, Jewish believers in Christ, and Jewish nonbelievers in Christ. In other words, these texts assume that Jews and Christians inhabit separate social spaces, each with its own leadership and membership.[23]

Justin adds more. He claims to know the reaction of the Jewish community to the spread of Christianity:

> You [Jews] not only refused to repent after you learned that he [Jesus] arose from the dead, but, as I stated above, you chose certain men by vote and sent them throughout the whole civilized world, proclaiming that "a godless and lawless sect had been started by a deceiver, one Jesus of Galilee, whom we nailed to the cross, but whose body, after it was taken from the cross, was stolen at night from the tomb by his disciples, who now deceive men by affirming that he has risen from the dead and ascended into heaven"; and accusing him of having taught those godless, lawless, and unholy things, of which to every nation you accuse all those who acknowledge him as their Christ, their Teacher, and the Son of God. And, in addition to this, even now, after your city has been seized and your whole country ravaged, you not only refuse to repent, but you defiantly curse him and all those who believe in him.[24]

Here Justin makes two claims. First, shortly after Jesus died, the authorities of Jerusalem[25] selected emissaries to travel throughout the civilized world to make known to Jews[26] the falsehood of Christianity, specifically, the falsehood of the story of Jesus' resurrection. The messengers accuse Jesus of having been a "deceiver,"[27] whose ultimate act of deception was carried out by his disciples. They stole his body and then spread the false story of his resurrection. Matthew (27:62–66; 28:11–15) knows the stolen-body story and attributes it to the chief priests, Pharisees, and elders; Justin adds the universal messengers, the reference to the "godless and lawless sect," the accusation of obscene behavior ("godless, lawless, and unholy things"), and the

Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jarhunderten, 4th ed. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1924), 262–67, 281–89; also see Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

23. Bishops, presbyters, and deacons are attested already in *1 Clement*, written ca. 96 CE.

24. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 108.2–3; "as I stated above" alludes to 17.1; see also 138.

25. Justin does not identify precisely by whom these messengers were sent.

26. Justin does not identify precisely the recipients of these messages.

27. See too Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 69.7 (Jesus is accused of having been a magician).

acknowledgment that "we" Jews (without any mention of the Romans!) crucified Jesus.[28] Second, even now, Justin says, after the city has been seized and the land ravaged in the war of Bar Kokhba (132–135 CE), the Jews persist in cursing Jesus and all those who believe in him.

Scholars debate the reliability of these two claims. Justin's claim that the Judean authorities sent out anti-Christian messengers throughout the Roman Empire is of a piece with the claim in the book of Acts (9:1–2; 22:5) that the high priest commissioned Paul (via "epistles") to travel from Jerusalem to Damascus and to arrest there any followers of Jesus.[29] Some scholars accept the fundamental historicity of these reports, but I (and many others) do not because I find it impossible to believe that the office of the Jerusalem high priest commanded sufficient support and exerted sufficient authority so as to be able to control, or even attempt to control, Jewish religious life in the Diaspora. The high priest could not control Jewish religious life in Judea, so how could he control Jewish religious life in the Diaspora? It is more likely that Justin's report of the anti-Christian messengers (I leave aside the report of Acts) is a Christian invention, spun out from the Christian interpretation of various biblical verses that highlight the Jewish rejection of Jesus.[30] The claim that the Jews "even now" curse Christ and Christians recurs several times in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, and again there is scholarly debate about the meaning and reliability of this claim. Many scholars connect this anti-Christian cursing with the rabbinic Birkat ha-minim (discussed below), but the Birkat ha-minim does not curse Christ and did not in its earliest stages mention Christians at all. Furthermore, Justin does not always locate this cursing in the synagogue.[31] So Justin's report stands uncorroborated. Uncorroborated, of course, does not mean untrue; it means that we are not sure what to do with it.[32]

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28. There is remarkable confluence between the Jewish view of Jesus in this passage and the Jewish view of Jesus in *b. Sanhedrin* 43a, which also sees Jesus as an idolater and deceiver and which also attributes his execution to Jewish authorities acting without any involvement of the Romans. See Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 63–74.

29. In his letters Paul does not claim any commission from the high priest (1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Phil. 3:6).

30. William Horbury, "Jewish-Christian Relations in *Barnabas* and Justin Martyr," in *Jews and Christians: The Parting*, ed. Dunn (note 2 above), 342, reprinted in William Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 127–61. The anti-Christian messengers are also mentioned by Eusebius and Jerome.

31. The Jews curse Christ and/or Christians: Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*16.4*; 47.4; 93.4; 96.2*; 108.3; 133.6; 137.2* (the asterisked passages place the cursing in the synagogue).

32. Aside from Horbury, "Jewish-Christian Relations," none of the contributors to

What is important for our purposes is that Justin, an important witness to Christianity in the mid-second century CE, thinks that there is an unbridgeable divide between Jews who do not believe in Christ and gentiles (like Justin) who do. They speak with each other, as Justin does with Trypho, but the communities are unambiguously separate.[33] This is not particularly surprising: as I remarked above, Jews and gentiles had occupied separate social spaces long before Christians entered the mix.

JEWISH EVIDENCE

If the advent of Christianity did not change the social separation of Jews and gentiles, it did introduce a new complication to Jewish communal life since now there were two sorts of Jews, those who believed in Christ and those who did not. In this section we shall see rabbinic evidence that the former (Jews who believe in Jesus) could be included by the latter (Jews who do not believe in Jesus) in the category of *minim*, conventionally translated "heretics." The meaning of this category and the identity of the people so labeled are much-discussed issues.

Since in this chapter I am primarily interested in the second century CE, I shall focus chiefly on the Mishnah and Tosefta. The Mishnah has been introduced above (in chap. 7). The Tosefta is similar to the Mishnah, only larger. It contains more anecdotes, more scriptural exegesis, and more ruminations about nonlegal topics than does the Mishnah, but otherwise it is very close to the Mishnah in arrangement and language. There is a complex synoptic relationship between the Tosefta and the Mishnah; on the one hand, the Tosefta regularly quotes or paraphrases our Mishnah or assumes the existence of our Mishnah; but on the other hand, the Tosefta also contains passages that seem to constitute the stuff out of which the Mishnah was created. In other words, the Tosefta appears to be both earlier and later than the Mishnah. Fortunately for us, this problem is not our problem.

The Mishnah

In nine passages the Mishnah refers to *min*, "heretic"; *minim*, "heretics"; or *minut*, "heresy."[34] These passages, relatively brief and sparing in detail, show

Dunn's symposium even mentions Justin's reported messengers.

33. In *Dialogue with Trypho* 47.2–3, Justin mentions gentile Christians who observe the Law, and Jewish Christians who seek to impose the Law on gentile Christians. In Justin's eyes, both belong to the community of Christians.

34. *M. Berakhot* 9:5; *Rosh HaShanah* 2:1; *Megillah* 4:8–9; *Sotah* 9:15; *Sanhedrin* 4:5;

that the Mishnah fundamentally is not interested in *minim* or *minut*. These *minim* are a varied lot characterized by a variety of theological and ritual errors. One of the passages refers to Christianity. Among the events that will presage the arrival of the end of days is that "the kingdom [the Roman Empire] will convert to *minut* (Christianity)." This passage is obviously a post-Mishnaic addition, not earlier than the fourth century CE, when the Roman Empire in fact converted to Christianity. This passage aside, the Mishnah's *minim* are not Christians nor is there any sign of Christians anywhere else in the Mishnah. The editors of the Mishnah have little interest in *minim*, no interest in heresy, and no interest whatever in Christians.

The Tosefta

The Tosefta contains many additional references to *minim*; among these are two passages that apply the category of *minim* to Jewish Christians and one passage that does not use the word *minim* yet refers to Jewish Christians.[35] Because of their intrinsic interest, I present and discuss all three. Here is the first.

Mishnah *Shabbat* rules that "any of the Holy Scriptures may be saved from a fire (on the Sabbath)," even if the act of rescue entails violation of the Sabbath. On this Mishnah, the Tosefta comments as follows:[36]

> The parchment-sheets[37] and the [Torah] scrolls[38] of *minim* may not be saved from a fire [on the Sabbath], but are allowed to burn where they are, they and their divine names.
>
> R[abbi] Yosi the Galilean says: On weekdays one cuts out[39] their divine names and hides them away, and burns the rest.

Hullin 2:9; *Parah* 3:3; *Yadayim* 4:8. The standard English translation of the Mishnah is Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933; often reprinted).

35. Just to be clear: the Tosefta has other non-Mishnaic references to *minim* (e.g., *t. Megillah* 3.37); but because they cannot be shown to refer to Christians, they are not treated here.

36. *M. Shabbat* 16:1; *T. Shabbat* 13.5, ed. Lieberman, 58–59.

37. Or "the Gospels," *ha gilyonim*; see below.

38. Wilhelm Bacher, "Le mot *minim* dans le Talmud désigne-t-il quelquefois des chrétiens?" *Revue des études juives* 38 (1899): 38–46, esp. 42, argues that *sifrei minim* are Torah scrolls written by *minim*. For discussion, see Daniel Sperber, "*Sifrei haminim*," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 18:564–65. Accessed online through the *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. The text is unchanged from the original print edition of 1971–72.

39. Lit., "pierces."

> R. Tarfon said: I swear by the lives of my children[40] that if these scrolls were to come into my hands, I would burn them and their divine names. Even if a murderer[41] were pursuing me, I would enter a house of idolatry rather than enter[42] a house of theirs, for the worshippers of idolatry do not recognize him [God] and deny him, but these [*minim*] recognize God but deny him. . . .
>
> R. Yishmael said: If, in order to bring peace between husband and wife, the Omnipresent said that the holy writing on a scroll[43] is to be scraped off into water [Num. 5:23], all the more so should the scrolls of the *minim*, which bring enmity between Israel and their father in heaven, be erased, they and their divine names! . . .
>
> Just as they [the scrolls of the *minim*] are not to be saved from a fire, they are not to be saved from a landslide,[44] or a flood, or anything else that would destroy them.

Who are these *minim*, who recognize God but deny him, who bring enmity between the people of Israel and God in heaven, whose houses are to be avoided even more than the houses of idolatry, whose scrolls are not to be rescued from a fire on the Sabbath, whose scrolls on a weekday are to have their divine names removed and the remainder consigned to the flames? Surely (?)[45] these are Christians, or to be more accurate, Jewish Christians. Their Jewish character is evident from the fact that they arouse divine wrath against the people of Israel and from the fact that their Torah scrolls are written in Hebrew and contain the divine name in Hebrew. Their Christian character is evident from the first word of the excerpt, *ha-gilyonim*, translated above as "the parchment sheets," which seems to be a deliberate pun on the Christian name for the Gospels (*euangelia*). We should like to know more about these Gospels and scrolls.[46] In any case, the point of the passage is that Christian scrolls are not sacred although they contain the name of God; in fact, they should be actively destroyed (once their divine names have been removed). Surely[47] the passage also implies that God-fearing rabbinic Jews should distance themselves from the owners and purveyors of such texts.

40. Lit., "may I strike my children" or "may I twist my children."
41. Lit., "pursuer."
42. Lit., "but I would not enter."
43. Lit., "a scroll written in holiness."
44. Or "cave-in."
45. "Surely" means "not so surely." Adiel Schremer is not convinced that this passage is talking about Christian *minim*; see his *Brothers Estranged: Heresy, Christianity, and Jewish Identity in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 84–86.
46. The *euangelia* seem to be written in Hebrew too. I have translated *sefer/sefarim* throughout as "scrolls," but perhaps in connection with Christians, we should translate "books" or "codices."
47. This time I am sure.

Tosefta *Hullin* contains two remarkable stories about the interaction of Jewish Christians with rabbinic sages. In response to Mishnah *Hullin* 2:9, one of the nine Mishnaic passages to mention *minim*,[48] the Tosefta harshly condemns *minim* ("Their wine is the wine of idolatrous libations, their scrolls are scrolls of magicians, their children are *mamzerim*"),[49] even if their identity is no clearer in the Tosefta than in the Mishnah.[50] The Tosefta then tells the following two stories:[51]

> [*Story 1*] It once happened that R. Eleazar b. Damah was bitten by a snake, and Jacob of Kfar Sama came to heal him in the name of Yeshua/Yeshu b. Pantira.
>
> But R. Yishmael did not permit him.[52]
>
> He[53] [R. Yishmael] said to him: You may not do so, ben Damah.
>
> He [R. Eleazar] said to him: I will bring you a proof (from Scripture) that he may heal me. But he did not have a chance to bring the proof before he died.
>
> R. Yishmael said: Fortunate are you, Ben Damah, for you have expired in peace, and did not breach the fence [erected by] the sages.
>
> Because anyone who breaches the fence [erected by] the sages—in the end punishment comes upon him,

48. *M. Hullin* 2:9: "No one may slaughter [an animal in such a way that the blood fall] into a hole of any sort, but one may make a hole in his house for the blood to flow into; one may not, however, do so in the marketplace so that he not imitate the heretics (*minim*)."

49. *Mamzerim*, usually translated "bastards," are the offspring of strongly prohibited sexual unions who are not marriageable by Israelites of good pedigree. The word was also used as a term of abuse.

50. On the Tosefta's harsh laws about *minim*, see Schremer, *Brothers Estranged*, 69–86. I agree with Schremer that there is no reason to assume that Christians are the target of the polemic. Another harsh anti-*minim* passage is *t. Bava Metzi'a* 2.33, and there too we should not assume that Christians are meant (Schremer, *Brothers Estranged* 61).

51. First story is *t. Hullin* 2.22–23, ed. Zuckermandel, 503; ed. Freiman, 87–88; my translation is based on that of Jacob Neusner, *The Tosefta* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 1380. The second story is *t. Hullin* 2.24, ed. Zuckermandel, 503; ed. Freiman, 88–89; my translation is based on that of Joshua Schwartz and Peter J. Tomson, "When Rabbi Eliezer Was Arrested for Heresy," *Jewish Studies Internet Journal*, http://www.biu.ac.il/js/JSIJ/10-2012/SchwartzandTomson.pdf. The first story appears with variations in *y. Shabbat* 14 end (and *Avodah Zarah* 40d); *b. Avodah Zarah* 27b; the second story appears with variations in *b. Avodah Zarah* 17b; *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 1.8. I cannot discuss those versions here.

52. That is, R. Yishmael did not permit R. Eleazar to be healed by Jacob. It is possible that the text means that R. Yishmael did not permit Jacob to heal R. Eleazar, but the following sentences turn on what R. Eleazar is permitted to do. Jacob himself is somewhere offstage and is not present in the dialogical space inhabited by R. Yishmael and R. Eleazar.

53. The Vienna manuscript of the Tosefta has "they," which seems to be an error.

As it is written, *he who breaches a fence—a snake shall bite him* [Eccl. 10:8].

[*Story 2*] It once happened that R. Eliezer was arrested on account of *minut*, and they brought him up to the platform to be tried.

The governor asked him: Should an elder like you engage in these things?

He answered: I consider the Judge trustworthy.

Now the governor thought that he had referred to him—though he referred only to his Father in Heaven—and so he said to him: Since you have deemed me trustworthy, I also said to myself, would these grey hairs[54] err in these matters? [Surely not!] Dismissed! You are released.

When he left the platform, he was distressed to have been arrested on account of *minut*. His disciples came to console him, but he refused to accept [their consolation].

R. Aqiva came and said to him: Rabbi, may I say something to you, so that perhaps you will not be distressed?

He said: Speak.

He said to him: Perhaps one of the *minim* told you a matter of *minut* which pleased you?

He said to him: By Heaven! You have reminded me. Once I was strolling on the main street of Sepphoris when I met Jacob of Kfar Sikhnin, who told me a matter of *minut* in the name of Yeshua b. Pantira, and it pleased me. Therefore I was arrested on account of *minut*, for I transgressed the words of the Torah. *Keep your way far from her and do not go near the door of her house* [Prov. 5:8].

For R. Eliezer taught: One should always flee from what is ugly and from whatever appears to be ugly.

Both of these wonderful stories are too rich to be discussed in full here. My interest is not in the stories' facticity, which is debatable at best and unrecoverable in any case, but in their construction of reality. Thus in story 1, we do not know and have no way of knowing whether a man named Eleazar ben Damah, having been bitten by a poisonous snake, had a significant conversation with a Jewish Christian named Jacob and an even more significant conversation with a rabbinic sage named R. Yishmael (whose floruit is customarily dated to the period 100–120 CE). And in story 2, we do not know and have no way of knowing whether a rabbinic sage named R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus (whose floruit is also customarily dated to 100–120 CE) was once arrested by the Romans on the suspicion of being a Christian, and whether he afterward attributed his ordeal to the fact that he once had had a conversation

54. Text and meaning uncertain. The syntax of this paragraph seems garbled. I am not persuaded by the interpretation of Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* 43–44.

with a Jewish Christian named Jacob.[55] I focus instead on how these stories imagine the relationship of rabbinic society and rabbinic sages with Jewish Christian *minim*. I shall first discuss each story separately and then treat the two together.

But first a brief note on Yeshu (or Yeshua) ben Pantira. As scholars have long noted, this is a Jewish anti-Christian way of referring to Jesus. In response to the story in Matthew and Luke of Jesus' miraculous birth, Jews told a story of his sordid origins. Jesus, they said, was the product of an adulterous union of Mary with a Roman soldier named Panthera. The Jewish story was known already to Origen (writing ca. 248 CE), citing the work of Celsus (ca. 180 CE). From antiquity through the Middle Ages, Yeshu ben Pantira (or Pandira or Panthera) is a standard Jewish appellation for Jesus of Nazareth.[56]

No one in the first story, neither R. Eleazar ben Damah nor R. Yishmael nor the narrator, doubts that Jacob of Kfar Samah is a potent healer. His power, which derives from the name of Yeshu ben Pantira, is such that he could have healed R. Eleazar ben Damah from his fatal snakebite. Why R. Yishmael objects so to a healing in the name of Yeshu is not explained. Nor are we told how R. Eleazar and Jacob came to know each other. R. Eleazar was about to try to convince R. Yishmael that in this case, in which his life was at stake, an exception should be made to the policy of keeping a safe distance from the name of Yeshu ben Pantira. We may assume that he was going to argue that danger to life overrides all sorts of prohibitions. But alas, before R. Eleazar can make his case, he dies. Rather than lament or feel guilt over his death, R. Yishmael instead lauds R. Eleazar's steadfast piety, for he did not breach the hedge of rabbinic discipline; R. Yishmael instructed him not to be healed by Jacob of Kfar Samah, and R. Eleazar followed those instructions, even at the cost of his life. The story ends with a brilliant stroke. In his brief but powerful epitaph, R. Yishmael cites the verse "He who breaches a fence, a snake shall bite him." But as the Babylonian Talmud perspicaciously observes, a snake did bite R. Eleazar! And R. Eleazar is innocent: he did not breach the rabbinic fence! The irony, of course, is intentional. Surely we are meant to understand that the verse is metaphorical: he who breaches the rabbinic fence, that is, he who does not follow the dictates and prohibitions of the sages, a snake will bite him, that is, he will suffer in the world to come. The snake that bit R. Eleazar in this world was not a metaphorical snake; but by acceding to the instructions of R. Yishmael, R. Eleazar guaranteed himself a share in

55. A weakness of the analysis of Schwartz and Thomson, "When R. Eliezer Was Arrested," is their confusion of narrative truth with historical truth.

56. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.32, trans. H. Chadwick, 31 (and see n. 3 ad loc.); Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 15–24.

the world to come. "Fortunate are you, Ben Damah, for you have expired in peace."[57] This story does not use the word *min*, but its context strongly suggests that the narrator would have characterized the Jewish Christian Jacob of Kfar Sama as a *min*.

The second story also features a Jewish Christian named Jacob, presumably not the same one as in the first story. Here we have a story, with R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus on trial, and also a story within that story, R. Eliezer's interaction with a *min*. First is a trial scene: the Romans suspect R. Eliezer of being a *min*, that is, a Christian, and put him on trial.[58] With a clever double entendre, R. Eliezer so impresses the judge that he is released. When R. Eliezer returns to his disciples, he is distraught: Why did God punish him thus? True, he was released unharmed, but why this trial and travail? When he is reminded of an incident, an accidental encounter with a Jewish-Christian *min* in Sepphoris, he is comforted; the ways of God are just.[59] The narrator, alas, does not reveal the content of the discussion between R. Eliezer and Jacob of Kfar Sikhnin, a gap that is filled in by the later version in the Babylonian Talmud. No matter the content of the conversation, what got R. Eliezer into trouble was the very fact of a conversation. Once, quite by chance, R. Eliezer chatted with a *min*, and that fact alone suffices to explain why God punished him by having him arrested for *minut*.

The two stories are juxtaposed in the Tosefta, and indeed their moral is the same: pious rabbinic Jews are to stay away from Jewish Christian *minim*, the disciples of Yeshu ben Pantira. This social barrier is defined in the first story as a hedge erected by sages, in the second story as a prohibition of the Torah (supported by a verse from Proverbs!). The encounters with Jewish-Christian *minim* depicted here are not dialogues about theology or philosophy. Neither encounter has anything to do with "identity formation." Jacob of Kfar Samah intended to demonstrate the power of Jesus ben Pantira by performing a healing in his name; Jacob of Kfar Sikhnin communicated some teaching in the

57. This explanation is advanced by the Yerushalmi. The commentators on *b. Avodah Zarah* 27b (and *b. Shabbat* 110a) explain it differently. Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 55–56, misconstrues the Bavli.

58. All modern scholars understand the story this way. It is worth noting, however, that several important medieval Jewish commentators understand the opening line of the story not as "When R. Eliezer was arrested on a suspicion of *minut*," but as "When the *minim* arrested R. Eliezer." In this reading the governor is a leader of the *minim* and wants to know why R. Eliezer does not follow the *minim*.

59. R. Eliezer is seeking a theological explanation for his ordeal, not a historical one: for the sin of consorting with a *min*, he is punished by being arrested on a suspicion of *minut*. Schwartz and Tomson, "When R. Eliezer Was Arrested," explain that some informer saw R. Eliezer in the marketplace with a *min* and reported the encounter to the Romans. This is beside the point.

name of Jesus ben Pantira. Those modern scholars who argue that Christian truth claims in general, or Jewish-Christian truth claims in particular, had an important formative effect on the shaping of rabbinic truth claims will find little support here for their argument. The Jewish-Christian *minim* depicted here are not part of rabbinic society; they rub shoulders with rabbis but only occasionally and only desultorily. They are not rabbis and are not depicted as rabbis; no one mistakes them for rabbis. They are outsiders. R. Eliezer knows that Jacob of Kfar Sikhnin is a *min*; R. Eleazar ben Damah does not dispute R. Ishmael's characterization that healing in the name of Yeshu ben Pantira is wrong in principle. The message of the stories is clear: Stay away! Danger!

In sum, from the rabbinic evidence surveyed thus far, it is hard to know if there was a parting of the ways between rabbinic Jews and Jewish Christians, not because there was so much intermingling between these communities but because there was so little. The Mishnah ignores them. The Tosefta has two—only two!—relevant stories set in the early decades of the second century CE, but we have no way of assessing the historicity of either story or of determining whether the stories are evidence for the period in which they are set or for the period in which they were produced (probably third century CE). The stories imply that rabbinic Jews avoid or ought to avoid Jewish Christians. The same point emerges from the polemic in Tosefta *Shabbat* against the books of the *minim*, that is, Jewish Christians. Perhaps the vitriolic denunciation of the *minim* in Tosefta *Hullin* also refers to Jewish Christians, but we can't be sure.

The meagerness of the data, and the pointedness of the data, strongly suggest that the rabbinic community and the Jewish-Christian community did not have much to do with each other. We may freely assume that rabbis and Jewish Christians occasionally bumped into each other, as R. Eliezer and Jacob of Kfar Sikhnin did one day in downtown Sepphoris; we may even assume that they might have engaged from time to time in serious theological debates. But the evidence for these interchanges is meager (nonexistent in Mishnah and Tosefta). The Tosefta regards Jewish Christians (and others) as *minim*, which might suggest that Jewish Christians were "inside" rabbinic society, but the evidence is sparse; there certainly is no sign that the sage editors of the Tosefta were more perturbed by the Jewish-Christian expression of *minut* than by other, no less noxious, expressions of *minut*.

The Birkat ha-minim

I turn now to the Birkat ha-minim, the liturgical expression of the rabbinic disdain for *minim* that I treated briefly in chapter 7 (above). *Birkat ha-minim*

literally translates as "the benediction concerning the *minim*," or more fully, "the benediction of God, the destroyer of the *minim*." This prayer has had a long and tortuous history; by the fourth century CE, it became an anti-Christian prayer, but it did not begin as one. Let us look at the evidence. For the sake of completeness, we shall look beyond the Mishnah and Tosefta to the Yerushalmi (the Talmud of the land of Israel) and the Bavli (the Babylonian Talmud) as well.[60]

The Mishnah says nothing about the Birkat ha-minim.

The Tosefta has one reference to Birkat ha-minim:[61]

> The Eighteen Benedictions of which the sages speak correspond to the eighteen appearances of the divine name in Ascribe to the Lord, O divine beings [Ps. 29]. [When reciting the Eighteen Benedictions] one should include the benediction about *minim* in the benediction about separatists [*perushim*],[62] the benediction about proselytes in the benediction about elders, the benediction about David in the benediction who [re]builds Jerusalem. If one recited each of these separately, he has [nevertheless] fulfilled his obligation.

The heart of the rabbinic daily liturgy is a prayer consisting of eighteen paragraphs, each paragraph devoted to a specific theme and concluding with a benediction of God ("Blessed are you, O God, who . . ."). The history of this prayer is much debated (see chapter 3 above). It seems that in early rabbinic times the themes, the number of themes, and the precise wording of each thematic paragraph were not yet fixed; at some point the number of benedictions was fixed at eighteen (hence the prayer became known as "the Eighteen"), and the specific themes were established. Fixed wording was not established until the early Islamic period. This Tosefta passage attests some of these developments. The opening sentence tries to find a basis in Scripture for the number eighteen; it is not explained why the number of appearances of the divine name in Psalm 29 should have anything to do with the number of benedictions in the central prayer of the daily liturgy. Indeed, the

60. There are many recent scholarly studies of the Birkat ha-minim. The fullest is Yaakov Teppler, *Birkat ha Minim* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); the best is Ruth Langer, *Cursing the Christians? A History of the Birkat ha minim* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). See too Uri Ehrlich, "*Birkat Ha-Minim*," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 3:711–12, accessed online through the *Gale Virtual Reference Library*.

61. *T. Berakhot* 3.25, ed. Lieberman, 17–18. The translation of this text that appears in Teppler, *Birkat ha Minim*, 100, contains a serious mistake (perhaps the fault of the translator, not the author). The Vienna manuscript of the Tosefta at *t. Taʿanit* 1.10, ed. Lieberman, 326, also refers to the Birkat ha-minim, but the reference is absent from the Erfurt and London manuscripts and the printed editions. I do not discuss it here.

62. Perhaps to be vocalized *paroshim*.

Talmudim adduce other "proofs," most just as fanciful as this.[63] The Tosefta then explains that certain themes should be paired: *minim* should be paired with separatists (*perushim*); proselytes should be paired with elders; and King David should be paired with Jerusalem in the benediction "who [re]builds Jerusalem." The purpose of these pairings is to allow the maximum number of themes to be treated without exceeding the eighteen-benediction limit. The Tosefta clearly implies that each of these themes is the subject of an already-existing benediction.

The first of these pairs is our concern. The Tosefta says that the benediction concerning separatists (*perushim*) should be combined with the benediction concerning *minim*. The Tosefta does not explain the content of either benediction, but we may safely assume that the former benediction invokes God's power in destroying or otherwise harassing the separatists, while the latter does the same for the *minim*. Who are these separatists, and what is their relationship with *minim*? The Tosefta does not explain. Modern scholars have suggested that "the separatists" were the Jews who abandoned their compatriots in their struggles against the Romans or who otherwise separated themselves from the Jewish community. In contrast, *minim* (as we have seen) are Jews whose theology and/or religious practice was "incorrect." By melding the two, the Tosefta conflates political/social deviance with religious deviance ("deviance," of course, from the perspective of the group doing the defining, in this case the rabbinic sages).[64]

The Yerushalmi provides three important bits of additional information. First, it claims that the benediction about *minim* was instituted at the rabbinic conclave at Yavneh (the gathering of sages in the decades after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE), although it is not clear whether the Yerushalmi means the original separate benediction about *minim* or the merged benediction about *minim* and separatists.[65] The Yerushalmi probably deduced this information from Mishnah *Berakhot* 4:3, which has Rabban Gamaliel, a prominent sage of the Yavnean period, declare that a person should pray "Eighteen" every day. Second, the Yerushalmi provides an alternative version of the Tosefta's statement regarding the pairing of separatists with *minim*. Here is the Yerushalmi: "[When reciting the Eighteen Benedictions,] one should include the benediction about *minim* and sinners in the benediction 'who lays low the arrogant.'" If we may assume that "who lays low

63. *Y. Berakhot* 4.3 7d, ed. Zussman, col. 37; *b. Berakhot* 28b–29a.

64. On these separatists, see David Flusser, "4QMMT and the Benediction against the Minim," in *Judaism of the Second Temple Period*, vol. 1, *Qumran and Apocalypticism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), chap. 9 (also via www.publishersrow.com); Schremer, *Brothers Estranged*, 57–68.

65. *Y. Berakhot* 4.3 8a, ed. Zussman, col. 37 // *Taʿanit* 2.2 65c, ed. Zussman, col. 713.

the arrogant" [*makhniʾa zedim*] is the concluding phrase of the benediction against separatists, then we may conclude that the Yerushalmi agrees with the Tosefta: the benediction concerning *minim* (and sinners too)[66] is to be combined with the benediction concerning separatists.[67] Third, the Yerushalmi states that if a prayer leader omits any of the Eighteen Benedictions, he is not compelled to go back to recite it at its proper place unless he skips one of the following three benedictions, in which case he is compelled to go back to recite it. Why? Because "I suspect that he might be a *min*." The three benedictions are "who revives the dead," "who lays low the arrogant," and "who [re]builds Jerusalem." Omission of the benediction "who revives the dead" naturally raises the suspicion of unbelief in the resurrection of the dead. Omission of the benediction "who lays low the arrogant" naturally raises the suspicion of *minut*, because the benediction calls for the destruction of separatists and *minim*. Omission of the benediction "who [re]builds Jerusalem" naturally raises the suspicion of unbelief in the Davidic messiah. The Yerushalmi then reports a story about Samuel the Small, who once, while leading the prayers, omitted the benediction "who lays low the arrogant," but was not compelled to go back because no one suspected him of being a *min*. Why Samuel the Small omitted the benediction is not explained.[68]

The Bavli (Babylonian) Talmud has a somewhat different version of all three of the Yerushalmi's points. It attributes the authorship of the benediction about *minim* to Samuel the Small, which the Yerushalmi does not do. It agrees with the Yerushalmi that the benediction was established at Yavneh but claims that it was formulated at the specific request of Rabban Gamaliel. It agrees with the Yerushalmi that if a prayer leader omits the benediction about *minim*, he is to be called to account, except that in the Yerushalmi he is made to go back and recite the benediction while in the Bavli he is to be removed from his position. The story about Samuel the Small is told in somewhat different form, as is the ruling that the benediction concerning the *minim* is to be combined with another thematically related benediction.[69]

How to make sense of these conflicting and inconsistent traditions, and how to sort out their interrelationship—these questions have been discussed many times in modern scholarship and cannot be treated here in any detail. In particular, scholars have long debated the historicity of the Bavli's claim that Birkat ha-minim was formulated at the request of Rabban Gamaliel. For our purposes the following points are important:

66. Some scholars have suggested that "sinners" (*poshʿim*) is a variant reading of "separatists" (*perushim*).

67. *Y. Berakhot* 4.3 8a, ed. Zussman, col. 37 // *Taʿanit* 2.2 65c, ed. Zussman, 713.

68. *Y. Berakhot* 5.4 9c, ed. Zussman, col. 47.

69. *B. Berakhot* 28b–29a and *Megillah* 17b.

All three sources agree that the benediction had its own history before being incorporated into the Eighteen Benedictions.

The Yerushalmi and Bavli claim that the benediction was formulated in the period of Yavneh, the formative period of the Mishnah. This claim is unknown to the Tosefta.

The Birkat ha-minim does not refer by name to specific groups. If we may take together all the categories named in the Tosefta and the Yerushalmi, we have separatists (*perushim*), sinners (*posh'im*), arrogant ones (*zedim*), as well as *minim*. These broad categories seem to refer to classes of people, not specific groups.

None of the texts explains the purpose of the Birkat ha-minim. Why do we praise God for destroying or laying low separatists and heretics? Both the Yerushalmi and the Bavli describe the negative social consequences that befall the prayer leader who omits or mangles the benediction; he needs to recite the prayer over again (Yerushalmi) or is removed from his post (Bavli). Many scholars have assumed that this indeed was the purpose of the benediction: to "smoke out" separatists and heretics who, we may presume, would not want to praise God for bringing about their own destruction. But even if the unmasking of heretics may have been an effect of the institution of this benediction,[70] we cannot be sure that it was its purpose. There are all sorts of reasons why we may wish to curse those whom we regard as our enemies;[71] the Yerushalmi and Bavli do not explain.

It is not impossible that the *minim* of the benediction are, or at least include, Christians. As we have seen, in two passages the Tosefta calls Christians *minim*, so it may be doing so here as well. However, the Tosefta uses the same label also for non-Christian heretics; thus, absent additional evidence, the Christian connection is just a possibility, nothing more.

Furthermore, even if the *minim* here are or include "Christians," they are not Christians tout court. As we have seen, the Christians with whom the Tosefta is familiar are Jewish Christians, ethnic Jews who believe in Jesus. The Birkat ha-minim says nothing about gentile Christians or Christianity at large.

Hence it is most unlikely that the benediction about *minim* has anything to do with Justin Martyr's statement, cited above, that the Jews daily curse Christ and Christians. The Birkat ha-minim mentions neither Christ nor

70. I leave aside the question of whether heretics and separatists would recognize themselves as heretics and separatists; probably not.

71. David Henshke suggests that the cursing of enemies is to ensure that God will listen to our prayers, not theirs; see his "From *Parashat ha Ibbur* to *Birkat ha minim*," in *From Qumran to Cairo: Studies in the History of Prayer*, ed. Joseph Tabory (Jerusalem: Orhot, 1999), 75–102 (Hebrew).

gentile Christians (like Justin). The Birkat ha-minim is unknown outside the land of Israel and Babylonia; Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* was set in Ephesus, and written (perhaps) in Rome.[72] In the late fourth century CE, two church writers active in Byzantine Palaestina, Epiphanius and Jerome, refer to the Birkat ha-minim. Three times a day, they say, the Jews curse the Nazoreans/Nazarenes, Jewish believers in Christ; Jerome even knows that the Jews call them *minim*. There can be little doubt that Epiphanius and Jerome are referring to the Birkat ha-minim, which by the late fourth century CE had become explicitly anti-Christian (that is, anti-Jewish Christian) and sufficiently well known to attract the attention of gentile Christian outsiders in Roman Palaestina; in contrast, in the second century CE in Rome, Justin could not have known the Birkat ha-minim.[73]

Some scholars have argued for a connection between the Birkat ha-minim and three passages in the Gospel of John. The argument goes as follows: In three passages John says that the Jews (in one passage: the Pharisees) have put (or will put) "out of the synagogue" those who believe in Christ.[74] In this strand of the Gospel of John, being put out of the synagogue is a bad thing; Christian believers want to be in the synagogue, not outside it. Where else do we have evidence that Jews (Pharisees) are expelling (Jewish) Christians from synagogues? The Birkat ha-minim, instituted at Yavneh and thus contemporary with the Gospel of John (ca. 100 CE), is an ideal candidate. The Birkat ha-minim, by providing a liturgical litmus test for heresy, expelled Jewish Christians from the synagogue, precisely the setting for this strand of the Gospel of John.[75]

72. That Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* was set in Ephesus is stated by Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.18.6. Justin was born in Samaria.

73. Regarding Epiphanius and Jerome, see William Horbury, "The Benediction of the *minim* and Early Jewish-Christian Controversy," *Journal of Theological Studies* 33 (1982): 19–61, reprinted in Horbury, *Jews and Christians*, 67–110. In Antioch in the 380s, John Chrysostom did not know the Birkat ha-minim: if he knew it, he surely would have mentioned it in his sermons against the Jews, *Discourses against Judaizing Christians*, trans. Paul W. Harkins (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1979). According to the *Martyrdom of Pionius*—set in Asia Minor in 250 CE, written (probably) not long afterward, and containing much anti-Jewish material—the Jews try to seduce Christians away from Christianity by inviting them to their synagogues. "I understand that the Jews have been inviting some of you to their synagogues"; no Birkat ha-minim here (*Martyrdom of Pionios* 13, http://archive.today/abf7S). See Louis Robert, *Le martyre de Pionios prêtre de Smyrne*, ed. G. W. Bowersock and C. P. Jones (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994), 82–83. In contrast to the argument developed here, David Rokeah insists that Justin is referring to the Birkat ha-minim; see his Hebrew translation of Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 5765/2005), n. 192 on *Dialogue* 16.4.

74. John 9:22; 12:42; and 16:2.

75. The classic statement of this theory is by J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology*

There is something to admire in this reconstruction even if in the final analysis it fails to convince.[76] The relationship of the Gospel of John to Jews and Judaism is much debated. If the Gospel was composed in Asia Minor or Syria, as is usually believed, it is most unlikely that anyone in either place would have ever heard of Birkat ha-minim around 100 CE, since the reach of rabbinic Judaism then fell far short of such distant locales. The Birkat ha-minim is attested only in Israel and Babylonia. Furthermore, as I commented above, it is not clear that the intent of Birkat ha-minim was to expel *minim* from the synagogue community. Indeed, if it did so, it did so only indirectly. If the rabbis wanted to expel the *minim*, one wonders why they didn't just expel the *minim*. If the rabbis wanted to expel the Jewish Christians, one wonders why they didn't just expel the Jewish Christians. If the rabbis wanted to invoke a curse upon Jewish Christians, one wonders why they didn't just curse them, as they would be doing by the fourth century. There are too many riddles and uncertainties here for a convincing case to be made.

In sum, the Birkat ha-minim is important evidence for the limits of rabbinic pluralism; even in the coalition-building atmosphere of Yavneh—if indeed the attribution of Birkat ha-minim to Yavneh be reliable—the rabbis had limits. *Minim* and separatists, sinners and arrogant ones, were beyond the pale. The precise identity of these social malcontents, the specific actions of these reprobates, the detailed thoughts of these ne'er-do-wells—these were not important to the sages who framed this benediction. They were trying to be inclusive.

CONCLUSIONS

The evidence surveyed here supports the view, once regnant among scholars but now unaccountably out of fashion, that by the early second century CE Jews (that is, ethnic Jews who do not believe in Christ) and Christians (that is, ethnic gentiles who do believe in Christ) constituted separate communities, each with its own identity, rituals, institutions, authority figures, and literature. To be sure, we may assume that there were Jewish communities of various sorts, such as rabbinic and nonrabbinic, Hebrew-reading and non-Hebrew reading; and we may assume that there were Christian communities

in the Fourth Gospel, 3rd ed. ([1st ed., 1968] Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

76. For summaries of the critique, see John S. Kloppenborg, "Disaffiliation in Associations and the *aposynagōgos* of John," *HTS Theological Studies* 67, no. 1 (2011), art. #962, http://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/962/html; and Langer, *Cursing the Christians*, 27–33.

of various sorts, such as proto-orthodox and "gnostic"; hence, generalizations are hazardous. But all the extant evidence points in the same direction. There were no mixed communities of Jews and Christians, except of course for Christian communities which numbered among their members Jews who had converted to Christianity, and except for Jewish communities which numbered among their members Christians who had converted to Judaism. But absent conversion, the boundaries between the Jewish and the Christian communities were clear enough and stable enough. As the second century proceeded, the boundary would become ever clearer and ever more stable.

The evidence for all this, especially on the Christian side and from the perspective of the Romans, is abundant and consistent and has been briefly surveyed above. Here are some additional considerations, not yet mentioned. A large stock of Judeo-Greek literature migrated with Christians in their journey out of Judaism; hence the Greek versions of the Hebrew Bible became Christian Scriptures, just as they are Jewish. The works of Philo owe their preservation to this migration. The works of Josephus (completed around the year 100 CE) mark the end of this literary migration; Judeo-Greek writings composed after around 100 CE were not preserved by Christians and as a result have disappeared (aside from a few small exceptions).[77] The simplest explanation for this phenomenon is that after around 100 CE, Christian communities were distinct from the Jewish, not only the Hebrew-writing sages of Roman Palaestina but also the Greek-writing Jewish communities of the Diaspora.

Justin (writing around 160 CE) states boldly and forthrightly that gentile Christ-believers are God's holy people, God's chosen people, the true children of God, and the true people of Israel.[78] By the end of the second century, Christians were producing their own Scriptures, which were distinguished from Jewish Scriptures not only in content but also in form: they were written in codices (books) instead of scrolls, and they employed a distinctive system for abbreviating the names of God and Christ (Jewish scrolls had no such system).[79] By the end of the second century CE, we have our earliest description (in Rome) of parallel and separate religious congregations, one a church (as we would call it)

77. The exceptions are some of the *Sibylline Oracles* (books 1–5 and 11–14 seem substantially Jewish) and a small corpus of synagogue prayers preserved in the *Apostolic Constitutions*; both sets of texts are included in J. H. Charlesworth, ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (New York: Doubleday, 1983–1985). For the synagogue prayers see Pieter van der Horst and Judith H. Newman, *Early Jewish Prayers in Greek* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008).

78. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 119.3–4; 123.9; and 135.3. These points were implicit a generation earlier in the *Epistle of Barnabas*.

79. Larry Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006).

and one a synagogue.[80] By the third century if not earlier, we have evidence for separate burials; Jews and Christians were separated in death, as in life.[81]

The Christian evidence also shows that through the centuries, from the second century onward, some Christians thought that other Christians associated with Jews too much, observed too many Jewish practices, attended Jewish synagogues too often, had a theology of Christ that was too "low," or otherwise seemed "too Jewish." While these accusations of "Judaizing" are good evidence for intra-Christian disputes about proper practice and belief, they do not necessarily reveal anything about the interactions of Christians with Jews. The accusation of "Judaizing" is one Christian accusing another of doctrinal or ritual or attitudinal error; the accusation assumes that Judaism is not-Christianity and that Christianity is not-Judaism. Clearly the accused's sense of the relationship of Judaism to Christianity was more nuanced than that of the accuser, but we have no reason to believe the accuser's assertion that the accused was confused about the location of the boundary between Judaism and Christianity, or, what is more important for our purposes, the location of the boundary between Jews and Christians.[82] Thus, to pick one much-cited example, in the 380s CE some of the good Christians of Antioch attended synagogue on the Jewish New Year because they wished to hear the shofar being blown. This was but one of the many ways by which they showed reverence for the synagogue. Bishop John Chrysostom reproved them for being traitors to Christianity and for consorting with the enemies of Christ. The bishop believed that these Christians had effaced the boundary between Judaism and Christianity, but apparently these Christians disagreed. They were Christians whose Christianity prevented them neither from respecting Judaism and its rituals nor from consorting with Jews. The fulminations of the bishop aside, there is no evidence that these Christians believed they were violating their communal boundaries or indeed that they were uncertain about the location of those boundaries. The Christian community did not include Jews, and the Jewish community did not include Christians, even if some Christians wandered over to the synagogue from time to time. The accusation of "Judaizing" is not evidence for the unparting of the ways.[83]

80. See the story of Pope Callistus (Calixtus) in Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium Haeresium* 9.12, ed. Marcovich, 351.

81. The Jewish cemetery at Jaffa and the Jewish catacombs of Bet Sheʿarim and Rome contain no demonstrably Christian burials. The Christian catacombs of Rome contain no demonstrably Jewish burials.

82. See the chapter on "Judaizing" in my *Beginnings of Jewishness* 175–97

83. The standard discussion is Robert L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). I also observe that there is far more evidence (all of it Christian) for Christians in synagogues than for Jews in churches.

On the Jewish side, virtually all of our evidence about Judaism after 100 CE is from the group known as rabbis or sages (see chapter 7 above). We may be sure that there were nonrabbinic Jewish communities in Roman Palaestina, Parthian/Sassanian Babylonia, and the Roman Diaspora, but we do not have their texts—we cannot even be sure that they wrote any texts—and we have little information about their communal boundaries.[84] Hence our discussion about Jewish evidence is basically a discussion about rabbinic evidence.

The most striking feature of the rabbinic evidence is its paucity. Given the enormous bulk of rabbinic literature, the paucity of explicit references to Jesus, Christianity, and Christians is striking. The rabbis were basically not interested. Contrast, for example, the rabbinic discussions of idolatry. These occupy an entire tractate in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Yerushalmi, and Bavli, not to mention scattered references elsewhere in the rabbinic corpus. These discussions treat both the nature of idolatry (what is it? where does it come from? why does God allow it to persist?) and the degree to which Jews must distance themselves from it. In contrast, the sages are simply not interested in Christianity and Christians.

This is not to say that the rabbis did not have contacts with Christians; of course they did. In addition to the (relatively few) stories about encounters between sages and Christians—the two earliest such stories are discussed above—rabbinic literature contains various passages, usually to be found in works of scriptural exegesis (midrash), which seem to reflect rabbinic responses to Christian theological claims based on problematic scriptural verses. These passages are interesting and important to be sure, and have received much attention in recent scholarship,[85] but they do not affect the overall picture. The sages paid little attention to Christianity and its truth claims, and there is no sign that rabbinic identity formation was shaped by the need to respond to Christians. The communal boundaries were clearly delineated, even if doctrinal points and scriptural passages were occasionally open to debate.

In any case, when the sages do encounter Christians, and when they debate Christians about Christian truth claims and scriptural exegesis, their Christian interlocutors are Jewish Christians, not gentile Christians. No surprise here, since we may assume that the rabbis kept their distance from gentile Christians just as they kept their distance from gentile polytheists. The Jewish Christians whom the rabbis met seem to have lived on the margins of rabbinic

84. The information that we do have derives from inscriptions; see Paul Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

85. Peter Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), reacting to the work of Daniel Boyarin.

society and on the margins of gentile Christian society. By the second century CE, these Jewish Christians did not fit in anywhere.

This brings us to the rabbinic neologism *min/minim*, conventionally translated "heretic/heretics." The term seems to have been a grab bag or catchall for various people (groups?) who upheld beliefs and/or practices that the rabbis did not like. The rabbis have other rhetorical means to indicate disapproval, but labeling a person as a *min* or a practice as *minut* was perhaps the most pointed, as is made evident by the Birkat ha-minim. This was a paragraph incorporated into the daily liturgy praising God for destroying or otherwise discomfiting the *minim*. The Mishnah knows the category *min/minim/minut* but not the Birkat ha-minim, which is first attested in the Tosefta. The social consequences of being labeled a *min* are never spelled out, just as the social consequences of the recitation of the Birkat ha-minim are never spelled out. The category *minim* certainly can include, and in two Tosefta passages does include, Jewish Christians, but the category is broader than just Jewish Christians. Many modern scholars have argued that the institution of the Birkat ha-minim played an important role in the parting of the ways between (rabbinic) Jews and (Jewish) Christians, but in recent years the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction; now there is an equally vociferous chorus on the other side arguing that the Birkat ha-minim had little or nothing to do with the emergence of two communities, the Jewish and the Christian. In this essay I have argued in favor of the latter view.

The Christian evidence and the rabbinic are disconnected. Christian texts (like Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*) emphasize that Christianity is right and that Judaism is wrong, because Christians, not Jews, properly understand the Hebrew Scriptures. There certainly is a parting of the ways here, at least in the reality as constructed by these texts. In contrast rabbinic texts completely ignore gentile Christians, basically ignore Christian truth claims, and provide limited evidence for meaningful contact between sages and Jewish Christians. Here the parting of the ways is expressed through avoidance and neglect. But it is a parting just the same.

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Suggestions for Further Reading

This book covers a wide variety of topics, and the number of possible suggested readings is enormous. Here is a brief selection of books and articles written in English. Advanced students will want to track down additional bibliography not only in English but also in French, German, Hebrew, and other languages. Given the ubiquity of the Internet, the ease of locating books and articles and Web sites online, and the plethora of new works, for this third edition I have added only a few works here and there.

Primary Sources

Throughout this book, I frequently cite or allude to the following works (listed more or less chronologically). I list the editions that provide the translations cited in this book (except that occasionally I have introduced modifications or alternative versions).

The Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Apocrypha (which includes Ben Sira [= Sirach or Ecclesiasticus], 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees, *4 Ezra* [= 2 Esdras], Judith, and Tobit) are cited, with occasional modifications, from the New Revised Standard Version as published in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*, ed. Michael D. Coogan et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991; repr., 2001). Also, *The HarperCollins Study Bible* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993) and *The Jewish Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) are very useful. The verse enumeration of NRSV is given first, followed by that of the Hebrew. When I have substituted my own translation for that of the NRSV, I have so indicated with the abbreviation "AT" (author's translation).

The Dead Sea Scrolls are available in several translations: Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996); Géza Vermès, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, new ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2004); García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996); García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1997–98); Donald Parry and Emanuel Tov, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader*, 6 parts (Boston: E. J. Brill, 2004–5); 2nd ed. in 2 vols. (2013).

Works of the Pseudepigrapha (which include *Enoch* [= *1 Enoch*], *Jubilees*, *Prayer of Manasseh* [cf. NRSV Apocrypha], *Letter of Aristeas*, and the *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*) are cited from *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983–85). Another useful recent selection is *The Apocryphal Old Testament*, ed. H. F. D. Sparks (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984). See now *Outside the Bible*, ed. Louis H. Feldman, James Kugel, and Lawrence Schiffman, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013).

The works of Philo and Josephus are cited from the bilingual editions of the Loeb Classical Library: *The Complete Works of Philo*, ed. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, 10 vols. and 2 suppl. vols. (London: William Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929–62; often reprinted); and *The Complete Works of Flavius Josephus*, ed. H. St. J. Thackeray, R. Marcus, A. Wikgren, and L. H. Feldman, 9 vols. (London: William Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926–65; often reprinted). Two new series published by E. J. Brill are now under way: an annotated translation of the works of Philo, edited by David Runia; and an annotated translation of the works of Josephus, edited by Steve Mason.

The Mishnah is cited from the translation of Herbert Danby (London: Oxford University Press, 1933; often reprinted). Another one-volume academic translation of the Mishnah is by Jacob Neusner (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988).

The Tosefta has been translated by Jacob Neusner, 6 vols. (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1977); I cite the Tosefta from the edition of Saul Lieberman (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1955–88), where available, otherwise from the edition of M. S. Zuckermandel (Pasewalk, 1880; often reprinted). The standard English translation of the Babylonian Talmud is that edited by Isadore Epstein (London: Soncino Press; often reprinted; also online). The Yerushalmi Talmud has been translated by Jacob Neusner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982–91).

References to Jews and Judaism in classical literature have been collected and translated by Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1974–84).

Secondary Sources

Chapter 1: Ancient Judaism: Chronology and Definitions

For a detailed survey of the history of the latter part of the Second Temple period, consult any of the following standard works: Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, vol. 1, rev. and ed. Géza Vermès, Fergus Millar, et al. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973); Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum, sec. 1, *The Jewish People in the First Century*, ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974–76); *The World History of the Jewish People*, vol. 6, *The Hellenistic Age*, ed. A. Schalit; and vol. 7, *The Herodian Period*, ed. M. Avi-Yonah and Zvi Baras (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1972–75); E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976; repr., 1981); and *Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 2, *The Hellenistic Age*; and vol. 3, *The Early Roman Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989–99).

A useful sourcebook is Lawrence Schiffman, *Texts and Traditions: A Source Reader for the Study of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1998).

Chapter 2: Jews and Gentiles

On the entire complex of themes, see the two standard works of Martin Hengel: *Judaism and Hellenism*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974); and *Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980). See also Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); and Martin Goodman, ed., *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

On Jewish life in the Diaspora, see Joseph Mélèze Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt from Ramses II to the Emperor Hadrian* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1995); John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996); Erich Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Tessa Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001).

Political: On the Jeremianic political tradition, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Josephus, Jeremiah, and Polybius," *History and Theory* 21 (1982): 366–81, reprinted in *The Significance of Yavneh and other Essays in Jewish Hellenism* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2010) 105–20.

On the Maccabean rebellion, see Jonathan A. Goldstein's brilliant but idiosyncratic commentaries on 1 and 2 Maccabees in the Anchor Bible series (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976–83); see also his *Peoples of an Almighty God* (New York: Doubleday, 2002). The classic studies in English remain Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1966); and Elias J. Bickerman, *The God of the Maccabees* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979).

On the events under Caligula: full discussion in Smallwood, *Jews under Roman Rule* (listed above for chap. 1); see also *Philo's Flaccus: The First Pogrom*, trans. and ed. Pieter W. van der Horst, Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series, vol. 2 (Leiden and Boston: E. J. Brill, 2002).

On the wars of 66–74, 115–117, and 132–135 CE, see the full discussion in Schürer-Vermès (see above, for chap. 1). A good survey of causes is Martin Goodman, "Trajan and the Origins of Roman Hostility to the Jews," *Past and Present* 182 (February 2004): 3–29.

On the war of 66–74, see Martin Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt against Rome, AD 66–70* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Richard Horsley with John Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1999); Andrea M. Berlin and J. Andrew Overman, eds., *The First Jewish Revolt: Archaeology, History, and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 2002).

On the war of 115–117, see Stern's commentary on Appian of Alexandria fragment 348 and Cassius Dio fragment 437 in his *Greek and Latin Authors*, vol. 2; Miriam Pucci ben Zeev, *Diaspora Judaism in Turmoil, 116/117 CE: Ancient Sources and Modern Insights* (Louvain: Peeters, 2005).

On the war of 132–135, see Glen Bowersock, "A Roman Perspective on the Bar Kochba War," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, vol. 2, ed. William Scott Green (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 131–42; Benjamin Isaac and Aharon Oppenheimer, "The Revolt of Bar Kokhba: Ideology and Modern Scholarship," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 36 (1985): 33–60; Peter Schäfer, ed., *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

Cultural: On Judaism and Hellenism, see Moses Hadas, *Hellenistic Culture: Fusion and Diffusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); J. N. Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek?* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968); Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics That Shaped the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), esp. 57–81; Elias Bickerman, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, 3 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976–86); idem, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1983); Erich Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism*

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Lee I. Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1998); John J. Collins and Gregory Sterling, eds., *Hellenism in the Land of Israel* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2001).

Social: On conversion to Judaism, the classic study is Bernard J. Bamberger, *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1939; repr., New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1968). On conversion, intermarriage, and other aspects of Jewish identity in antiquity, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); and Christine Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). On *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire*, see the book with that title by Martin Goodman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). On immersion/baptism, see H. H. Rowley, "Jewish Proselyte Baptism and the Baptism of John," in his *From Moses to Qumran: Studies in the Old Testament* (New York: Association Press, 1963), 211–35; and Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Is 'Proselyte Baptism' Mentioned in the Mishnah?," in *Pursuing the Text: Studies in Honor of Ben Zion Wacholder*, ed. John Reeves (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 278–92, reprinted in *The Significance of Yavneh* (see above, for chap. 2).

A. Thomas Kraabel argues that the "God-fearers" never existed, but this position is untenable in the light of epigraphic, rabbinic, and pagan evidence (not to mention Christian evidence); see his "The Disappearance of the 'God-Fearers,'" *Numen* 28 (1981): 113–26; and *Diaspora Jews and Judaism: Essays in Honor of, and in Dialogue with, A. Thomas Kraabel*, ed. J. Andrew Overman (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992). Also see *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue*, ed. Steven Fine (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

On "anti-Semitism," see J. N. Sevenster, *The Roots of Pagan Anti-Semitism in the Ancient World* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975); John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

Chapter 3: The Jewish "Religion": Practices and Beliefs

The classic study of ancient Judaism is George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927–30; often reprinted). More recent works include Ephraim Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979); E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in*

the Age of Jesus Christ, vol. 2, rev. and ed. Géza Vermès, Fergus Millar, et al. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979); E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992). Each of these books in some detail treats the topics discussed in this chapter. I list a few additional specialized studies below.

On the cult of the temple, see Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978). On prayer, see Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1977); and Jakob Petuchowski, "The Liturgy of the Synagogue: History, Structure, and Contents," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, vol. 4, ed. William Scott Green (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 1–64.

On the sanctification of life through the study and observance of the Torah, the classic apologetic work of Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology: Major Concepts of the Talmud* (New York: Macmillan, 1909; repr., New York: Schocken Books, 1961), still is valuable. Also see Jacob Neusner, *The Way of Torah*, 3rd ed. (North Scituate, MA: Duxbury Press, 1979).

On magicians and miracle workers, see Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978). The classic work is Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition* (New York: Behrman House, 1939; repr., Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Also see Michael Swartz, *Scholastic Magic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); and Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

On women's Judaism, see Tal Ilan, *Integrating Women into Second Temple History* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001); eadem, *Mine and Yours Are Hers: Retrieving Women's History from Rabbinic Literature* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997); eadem, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996). Also see Leonie Archer, *Her Price Is beyond Rubies* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990); Judith Baskin, *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998); eadem, *Midrashic Women* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2002); Ross S. Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); eadem, *Women's Religions in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Amy-Jill Levine, ed., *"Women Like This": New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991). On the Therapeutae, see Joan Taylor, *Jewish Women Philosophers of First-Century Alexandria: Philo's "Therapeutae" Reconsidered* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). On menstrual impurity in Judaism, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Menstruants and the Sacred in Judaism and Christianity," in *Women's History and Ancient History*, ed. Sarah Pomeroy

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 273–98, reprinted in *The Significance of Yavneh*, 393–415 (see above, for chap. 2); and Charlotte Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). On the noncircumcision of women, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

On monotheism vs. polytheism, see Robert M. Grant, *Gods and the One God*, Library of Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); and Larry Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Continuum, 1998). On angels and other supernatural beings who complement or compete with God, see Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977); and J. E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1985). See now Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires:* Yetzer Hara *and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

On the god of the philosophers vs. the God of the Bible, see the classic study of Philo by Harry Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947; often reprinted); and David Winston's introduction and commentary to the Wisdom of Solomon in the Anchor Bible, *The Wisdom of Solomon* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979). On rabbinic theodicy, see David Charles Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); idem, *The Meanings of Death in Rabbinic Judaism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

On resurrection and life after death, see George Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972); Hans C. C. Cavallin, *Life after Death: Paul's Argument for the Resurrection* (Lund: Gleerup, 1974); Alan Segal, *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (New York: Doubleday, 2004); Claudia Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004). The burial practices of Second Temple times confirm that the belief in resurrection and life after death was widespread; see Eric M. Meyers, *Jewish Ossuaries: Reburial and Rebirth* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971); Pau Figueras, *Decorated Jewish Ossuaries* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1983); Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices, and Rites in the Second Temple Period* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2005).

On apocalyptic literature and eschatology, see D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964); Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press,

1979); John J. Collins, ed., *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, Semeia 14 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979); David Hellholm, ed., *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1983); John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1984).

Chapter 4: The Community and Its Institutions

The classic modern discussion of the social institutions of ancient Judaism (the temple, the Sanhedrin, the priesthood, guilds, sects) remains Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975). See too *The World History of the Jewish People*, vol. 8, *Society and Religion in the Second Temple Period*, ed. Michael Avi-Yonah and Zvi Baras (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1977); and John G. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, Library of Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986). On several points my discussion here is stated at greater length in my "The Rabbis in Second-Century Jewish Society," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 3, *The Early Roman Period*, ed. William Horbury, W. D. Davies, and J. Sturdy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 922–90.

On the priestly aristocracy of late Second Temple times, see Martin Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). On the Sanhedrin, see the detailed discussion in Raymond Brown, *The Death of the Messiah* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 339–72. On the rabbinic patriarch, see bibliography below for chap. 7.

On the *politeumata* of the Diaspora, see Shimon Applebaum's essay in vol. 2 of *The Jewish People in the First Century*, ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern (Assen: van Gorcum, 1974–76); and Aryeh Kasher, *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1985). An important collection of Greek documents is *Urkunden des Politeuma der Juden von Herakleopolis*, ed. James M. S. Cowey and Klaus Maresch (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2001).

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Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000; 2nd ed., 2005). On the ambiguous connection between prayer and synagogues, see Heather McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994). On the question of Pharisaic/rabbinic control of synagogues, see my essays "Epigraphical Rabbis," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 72 (1981): 1–17; and "Were Pharisees and Rabbis the Leaders of Communal Prayer and Torah Study in Antiquity? The Evidence of the New Testament, Josephus, and the Early Church Fathers," in *The Evolution of the Synagogue*, ed. H. Clark Kee (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 89–105; both reprinted in *The Significance of Yavneh* (see above, for chap. 2).

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On ancient Jewish schools, see R. Alan Culpepper, *The Johannine School* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975); and David M. Goodblatt, *Rabbinic Instruction in Sasanian Babylonia* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), with a discussion of earlier material as well.

On guilds and other private associations, see John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen Wilson, *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 1996); and Phillip Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003). On the Essenes as a utopian organization, see Doron Mendels, *Identity, Religion, and Historiography* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 420–39.

Chapter 5: Sectarian and Normative

On the phenomenon of sectarianism and on the ancient Jewish sects, see Albert Baumgarten, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1997); I am delighted to see that Baumgarten's own definition of "sect" (p. 7) does not much differ from the one I have proposed here. Also see Anthony Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach*, new ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Livona, MI: Dove Booksellers, 2001); and Eyal Regev, *Sectarianism in Qumran: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

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Glossary of Technical Terms

amoraim. Literally, "speakers," the rabbis of the third to fifth centuries CE in Israel and Babylonia who composed the two Talmudim.

Apocrypha. Literally, "things hidden away," apocryphal books are books of uncertain or disputed canonicity; they are to be "hidden away," that is, not read in public. The Apocrypha is the collection of Jewish books that are included in the Greek or Latin Old Testament of the church but not in the Hebrew Tanak of the Jews.

apocalypse. Literally, "revelation," a work that reveals, usually through the intermediation of an angel, some secret of nature or history. Most apocalypses of the Second Temple period treat eschatological themes and probably were written in the expectation that the end time was imminent.

Aristeas, Letter of. A pseudepigraphic treatise or epistle, attributed to a gentile courtier of Ptolemy Philadelphus but written by a Jew, probably in the last part of the second century BCE. Its story is the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, but its theme is the easy coexistence of Judaism with Hellenism.

Avot. See *Fathers.*

Bavli. See Talmud.

Ben Sira. A teacher in Jerusalem who, in about 200 BCE, wrote a wisdom book in Hebrew now contained in the Apocrypha. (The book is sometimes called Sirach or Ecclesiasticus.)

bet midrash. Literally, "house of study," a school or academy.

Birkat ha-minim. Literally, "the blessing [of God] concerning heretics," a paragraph inserted into the main prayer of the rabbinic liturgy asking God to destroy the heretics. There is much scholarly discussion whether the category "heretics" in this prayer includes Christians; see chap. 8.

cult. System of worship.

Diaspora. The "scattering" of the Jews throughout the world outside the land of Israel.

***Enoch,* book of.** A collection of pseudepigraphic works attributed to the antediluvian figure of Gen. 5. The earliest of these works *(1 Enoch)* contains sections that were composed in the third century BCE.

eschatology. Doctrine of the end (or end times). Eschatology includes the notions of life after death, resurrection, the final judgment, national restoration, messianic deliverance, and so forth.

Fathers. A tractate of the Mishnah (*Avot*) that, because of its exclusive focus on ethical and moral exhortations and its complete neglect of legal matters, is unlike any other tractate. Its opening two chapters are a chain of tradition depicting the transmission of the Torah from God to Moses and from Moses ultimately to the rabbis of the Mishnah.

Fourth Ezra. Also called Second Esdras, an apocalypse now in the Apocrypha, written shortly after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE.

***havurah* (or *haburah*).** Literally, "fellowship" or "association," a group of pietists whose regulations are detailed in rabbinic literature. The members of the group punctiliously observed the laws of purity and tithes, and they may have had a connection with the Pharisees.

***halakah* (or *halakhah*).** Normative law or practice, as defined by the rabbinic sages in the Mishnah and other works.

Hellenistic period. The period from 334 BCE, the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great, to the rise of the Maccabees in the 160s BCE.

Josephus. A Jewish historian of the first century CE whose works are our major sources for the history of the latter part of the Second Temple period. The *Jewish War*, completed in the early 80s CE, treats Jewish history from the rise of the Maccabees to the fall of Masada in 73/74 CE. The *Jewish Antiquities* was completed in 93/94 CE; its first part paraphrases the Bible, and its second surveys the Second Temple period from Hellenistic times to the eve of the revolt in 66 CE. *Against Apion*, completed around 100 CE, is an apology for Judaism and an attack on anti-Judaism.

Jubilees. A retelling of the book of Genesis, claiming to be the revelation of an angel to Moses, informing him of what is written on the heavenly tablets. The most striking feature of the book is its concern with chronology and its desire to legitimate a solar calendar. Probably written in the early Hasmonean period.

Maccabees. The dynasty founded by Mattathias the Hasmonean and his son Judah the Maccabee, which ruled the Jews from the 160s BCE to 63 BCE, when the Romans entered Jerusalem.

Mishnah. Literally, "repetition," an anthology of legal statements on various topics produced by the rabbis of the second century CE and edited by Rabbi Judah the Patriarch (cited with preceding *m.*). The book is arranged in six divisions; each division contains tractates. Any individual paragraph of the Mishnah is also called Mishnah. See chapter 7 for discussion.

Palestine or Palaestina. Literally, "the land of the Philistines," the name that the Romans gave the land of Judea after the defeat of Bar Kokhba in 135 CE.

Persian period. From 539 BCE, the conquest of Babylonia by Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, until 334 BCE, the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great.

***Pesher* (pl. *pesharim*).** Literally, "interpretation." The Qumran scrolls preserve the remains of several scriptural commentaries that are generally known as "pesharim."These commentaries aim to show that the biblical verses prophetically refer to the history of the Qumran group.

Philo. An Alexandrian Jew of the first half of the first century CE best known for his numerous and lengthy commentaries and essays on the Torah, especially Genesis.

politeuma. An autonomous ethnic community within a Greek city.

purity or ritual purity. The avoidance of sources of pollution: corpses, impure animals, sexual discharges, and so forth. The regulations are contained primarily in Leviticus 11–15 and Numbers 19 but are greatly elaborated in many of the works from Qumran and in rabbinic literature.

Pentateuch. See Torah.

Pseudepigrapha. Works that bear "false ascriptions," that claim to have been written by someone other than their true author. Modern scholars use the term loosely as a generic designation for Jewish works of antiquity that are not in the Bible, not in the Apocrypha, not Philo, not Josephus, not from Qumran, not rabbinic. What's left is conventionally if not always accurately consigned to "the Pseudepigrapha."

Ptolemies. The Macedonian (or Greek) rulers of Egypt, from the end of the fourth century BCE to the end of the first century BCE.

***Qedushah*.** The prayer that features the recitation of the *Sanctus* ("Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts," from Isa. 6:3).

rabbi, rabban (R.). A title of respect (rabbi, "my master"; rabban, "our master"), originally used only in second-person address but later used in the third person as well. The noun "rabbi" and the adjective "rabbinic" are mostly used as technical terms for the persons and culture of the society that produced the Mishnah and related works.

Roman period. From 63 BCE, the entrance of the Romans into Jerusalem, until the early seventh century, when the East was conquered by the Persians and later by the Arabs. (Most scholars use the term "Byzantine" to refer to the Roman Empire after the fourth century.)

sect. A small organized group that separates itself from a larger religious body and asserts that it alone embodies the ideals of the larger group because it alone understands God's will. See chapter 5.

Seleucids. The Macedonian (or Greek) rulers of Syria and western Asia from the end of the fourth century BCE to the early first century BCE.

Shema (pronounced "shĕ-MAH"). The paragraph beginning "Hear, O Israel" from Deuteronomy 6:4–9. According to the Mishnah, this paragraph is combined with Deuteronomy 11:13–21 and Numbers 15:37–41 to form a single prayer.

statutory prayer. A prayer that is recited to fulfill an obligation to pray. The prayer is not occasioned by any special need or event but is seen as a religious obligation in itself.

Talmud (pl. Talmudim or Talmuds). Literally, "study," the commentary on the Mishnah, which because of its size and discursive character is not really a commentary but an independent work. The rabbis of Israel in the third to fourth centuries CE produced the Yerushalmi, the Jerusalem Talmud (although it was produced in Galilee, not Jerusalem), also called the Palestinian Talmud or the Talmud of the land of Israel (cited with preceding *y.*); the rabbis of Babylonia in the third to sixth centuries produced the Babylonian Talmud (cited with preceding *b.*). With the decline of the fortunes of the Jewish community of the land of Israel in late antiquity, in the middle ages the Babylonian Talmud emerged as the more authoritative and more widely studied of the two.

Tanak (pronounced "tä-NAKH"). An acronym for Torah, Neviim (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings). The Hebrew Bible or Old Testament.

Tannaim. Literally, "teachers" (or "repeaters"), the rabbis of Palestine in the second century CE whose statements are contained primarily in the Mishnah but also in other rabbinic works.

Targum (pl. Targumim or Targums). A translation of Scripture into Aramaic.

Temple Scroll. The longest of the Dead Sea (or Qumran) Scrolls, the *Temple Scroll* paraphrases, rearranges, and supplements the laws of the Torah (Exodus–Deuteronomy). It claims to be a revelation of God to Moses so that God speaks in the first-person singular throughout. Scholars debate whether the book was meant to be a replacement for our Torah or whether it is simply an example of "rewritten Bible."

theodicy. Literally, "divine justice," the doctrines that seek to explain why a good and powerful God allows evil to exist in the world.

Therapeutae. A Jewish group living outside of Alexandria and known to us solely from the pages of Philo, *On the Contemplative Life*. The name is Greek and means "healers" or "ministers." The group consisted of both men and women but was celibate; they spent their days in communal worship of God and study of the Scriptures. See chapter 4.

Torah. Literally, "instruction," the first five books of the Bible. In Second Temple times, Greek-speaking Jews referred to it as "the Law." The church fathers coined the name Pentateuch, literally, "the five rolls." In rabbinic texts, the word Torah is often a synonym for what we would call "Judaism" (a word which did not enter the rabbinic lexicon until the middle ages).

Tosefta. The Tosefta is a rabbinic work similar to the Mishnah, only larger. It contains more anecdotes, more scriptural exegesis, more ruminations about nonlegal topics than does the Mishnah but otherwise is very close to the Mishnah in arrangement and language (cited with preceding *t.*). There is a complex synoptic relationship between the Tosefta and the Mishnah.

Yavneh (or Jamnia). The town west-northwest of Jerusalem where the rabbis first gathered after the destruction of the temple.

Yerushalmi. *See* Talmud.

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